ISLAMIC CONTRADICTORY THEOLOGY

PhD by Papers

By

ABBAS AHSAN

A thesis submitted

to the University of Birmingham for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Philosophy
School of Philosophy, Theology & Religion
College of Arts and Law
University of Birmingham
August 2021

Abstract

There are two overarching aims of the five collated papers that make up my thesis. The first is to demonstrate that making sense of an ineffable Islamic God in virtue of classical logic and various truth theories (under the purview of analytic philosophy) motivates a theological contradiction. The second is to offer a solution to this problem. I spend a substantial part of my thesis establishing the first of these aims. The reason for this is twofold. Firstly, it is to illustrate the incompatibility between an ineffable God of Islam and various modes of logical and metaphysical inquiry that fall under the purview of analytic philosophy. Although, it becomes increasingly evident that we cannot philosophically make sense of an *absolute* ineffable God, my inquiry still bears relevance. It offers a comprehensive insight into the logical and metaphysical perspectives that are responsible for motivating the theological contradiction in question. Secondly, fleshing out the various logical and metaphysical perspectives helps lay the theoretical groundwork for the solution.

It is not my aim to establish the ineffability of God within the Islamic tradition. That is, I do not engage with Islamic theology beyond referring to, and teasing out, an ineffable view of God from selected Islamic theological sources. The primary focus of my work is to establish that theological contradictions are motivated when assessing them against certain (analytic) philosophical modes.

This brings me to the second aim of my thesis, namely, the solution. After having established how an Islamic theological contradiction is motivated, it begs a solution. Prior to offering my solution, I evaluate the recent work on Christian contradictory theology by Jc Beall (2019, 2021). Beall's proposed solution to the fundamental problem of Christology is what he calls 'Contradictory Christology'. Although this may seem like a plausible solution for an Islamic theological contradiction, I argue to the contrary. Finally, I propose my own solution to the problem. I call this 'Islamic Mystical Dialetheism'.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to all upcoming Islamic analytic philosophers and Islamic analytic theologians.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

General Introduction and Synopsis of Each Paper

The Islamic theological tradition is no doubt, vast. It hosts various schools of thought. Each of which offers divergent views on almost every major doctrinal belief. One of the contentious matters that has occupied Islamic theology is concerning God. Early theological pursuits, more commonly known as the *kalām* tradition, responded to onslaughts against orthodox/traditionalist views of God. A defence was mounted against arguments that were perpetuated by non-Muslims in the expanding Islamic empire. More importantly, there was a vigorous engagement in polemics between dominant theological schools, such as the *Ashʿarites* and the *Muʿtazilites*. The method which drove the *kalāmic* tradition against unorthodox and heretical views of God was no different to their rivalries. Logic and philosophy had become a double-edged sword. Both were employed in attacking and defending matters concerning God. Over time, as the *mutakallimūn* became increasingly acquainted with disciplines of logic and philosophy, their defence and counterarguments matured. As did the arguments of their rivalries. The development of logical and philosophical arguments on both sides didn't just imply a perpetual impasse. It began creating a rational appetite for deciphering an intelligible relationship between man and God.

This resulted in a subtle change in the aim of *kalāmic* discourse. It became common with those theologians who were no longer concerned with exclusively offering a defence or counterarguments to their rivalries. Their prime concern shifted from a strictly apologetic approach to one that would propose novel arguments in philosophically substantiating doctrinal beliefs concerning God. Irrespective of whether those beliefs had encountered criticism or not. It was about constructing a formidable *philosophical* theology. Whose aim would not be confined to ad hoc defending or countering arguments against its rivalries. Instead, it would be multifaceted. The aims would be grounded in philosophically substantiating Islamic doctrinal

beliefs for reasons such as: dissipating the believers' doubts, convincing believers, and non-believers that Islam is rational, presenting the truth of Islamic doctrinal beliefs via logical and philosophical demonstration, establishing the falsehood of anything contrary to Islamic doctrinal beliefs, etc. Novel developments that were made throughout the Islamic medieval period in logic and philosophy, with a theological end in mind, lays testimony to this.

These aims have endured, and Islamic philosophical theology persists under this guise today. It is nowhere as thriving as it once was. Yet, despite its impoverishment, it exits. Though, at this point it's worth noting that 'theology' in 'Islamic philosophical theology' is no longer coterminous with the *kalām* tradition. While the 'philosophy' in 'Islamic philosophical theology' has significantly evolved. With the advent of the linguistic turn, came about a radical reconception of the nature of philosophy and its methods. This radical reconception brought about a shift in core disciplines, such as logic and metaphysics, under the pretext of analytic philosophy. More recently, analytic philosophy has increasingly began impacting theological methodology. We are particularly witnessing theology adapt to the ambitions of analytic philosophy under the rubric of 'analytic theology'. Analytic theology essentially involves "bringing the style, method, and literature of analytic philosophy to bear on theological topics" (Rea, 2020, p. 1). More specifically, Rea (2011) mentions, "As I see it, analytic theology is just an activity of approaching theological topics with the ambitions of an analytic philosopher and in a style that conforms to the prescriptions that are distinctive of analytic philosophical discourse" (Rea in Crisp and Rea, 2011, p.7). With the advancement of analytic philosophy, particularly in the anglosphere, Islamic philosophical theology is gradually beginning to explore and adapt to the ambitions of analytic philosophy. This exploration and adaption is still in its infancy. There is much ground to be covered prior to witnessing a fully-fledged 'Islamic (analytic) philosophical theology' or more specifically, an 'Islamic analytic theology'. Nonetheless, I presume it will eventually happen. There is hardly a difference between what

me might call 'philosophical theology' and 'analytic theology'. As Baker-Hytch (2016) puts it, "analytic theology just *is* analytic philosophical theology" (Baker-Hytch, 2016, p. 350).

Prior to witnessing a fully-fledged Islamic analytic theology, there are pressing meta-methodological questions that need to be addressed. One such question would include how well an Islamic analytic theology functions. That is, how would an Islamic analytic theology fair in approaching certain theological topics with the ambitious of an analytic philosopher. The kind of ambitions that conform to the prescriptive methods of analytic philosophy[1]. The aim of this question is to determine whether the ambitions of analytic philosophy are amenable with the Islamic theological tradition. To obtain a sense of how analytic theology functions, resorting to a Christian analytic theology my seem like a plausible move. That is because, the Christian tradition has been drawn upon in developing analytic theology from the onset. Oliver D. Crisp and Michael C. Rea's (2011) edited edition, entitled *Analytic Theology New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology* is proof of this. However, I don't think an Islamic analytic theology is amenable with the prescriptive methods of analytic philosophy. Moreover, resorting to a Christian analytic theology may certainly provide a helpful understanding of analytic theology and how it functions. However, it should not reflect or impose what it considers to be a normative methodology on how an Islamic analytic theology *ought* to fair in approaching certain theological topics with the ambitious of an analytic philosopher. I shall demonstrate this throughout the five collated papers that make up this thesis.

It should be noted that the scope of my thesis is confined to contemporary modes of analytic theology and philosophy. This means that I do not anticipate evaluating the *kalāmic* tradition. Nor do I hope engaging in Islamic theology beyond referring to a specific notion of God. I concede that my thesis cannot be completely severed from *kalāmic* tradition or classical Islamic

---

1 See Ahsan, A. (2020) Analytic Theology and its Method. *Philotheos*, 20(2), pp.

theology, since I hope to work within the remit of Islamic theology. Nevertheless, my reference to a specific notion of God from the (classical) Islamic theological discourse would suffice for my purpose. Allow me to demonstrate.

I establish my argument by selecting a specific theological topic within the Islamic tradition, namely, God. Doctrinal matters concerning God are fundamental within the Islamic tradition. It is primarily why they have occupied a central position within Islamic theological discourse. A persistent issue, which Muslim theologians and philosophers have encountered while engaging in matters concerning God, is being confronted with contradictions. These contradictions have largely arisen when attempting to make sense of dogmatic beliefs about God, which have been prescribed by divine scripture, with the aid of logic and philosophy. This would include attempting to reconcile between God's essence and attributes, divine predestination/foreknowledge and human freewill, God's atemporal, nonspatial nature and His being the ultimate cause of every temporal and spatial event, etc. Addressing such contradictory-entailing matters has led Muslim theologians and philosophers to espouse different approaches. These approaches have predominantly consisted of explaining away theological contradictions. This essentially involves resorting to moves such as *parameterisation*[2]. Yet for others, no approach seems apt enough to grapple such contradictions in any cognitively satisfying manner. In which case, they either concede to the inconsistent conclusions or choose to suspend judgement and pass over in silence.

---

2 "When one is confronted with a seemingly true contradiction, A ∧ ¬A, treat the suspected dialetheia A, or some of its parts, as having different meanings, and hence as ambiguous (maybe just *contextually* ambiguous). For instance, if one claims that $P(a) \land \neg P(a)$, parameterisation holds that one is in effect claiming that $P_1(a) \land \neg P_2(a)$ (e.g. elephants are big and not big, because they are big in the context of land animals on Earth, but not big in the context of stars and planets)." (Priest, Graham, Francesco Berto, and Zach Weber, "Dialetheism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/dialetheism/>.)

One specific theological contradiction concerns the ineffability of God. In medieval Islamic theology, there are notable Islamic theologians and philosophers who have advocated an ineffable God. Instances of this peculiar view are not very prominent. Yet, they do exist.

Proponents of this view range from the early Arab philosopher *Al-Kindī*[3] to the infamous

mystic *Ibn al-ʿArabī*[4] with the early *Ismāʿīlīs*[5] and *al-Ghazālī*[6] situated somewhere in between.

---

3 Notice that phrase ''the One in truth.'' This reflects a terminological shift from the third to the fourth section of *On First Philosophy*. Whereas previously al-Kindī spoke only of things that were ''accidentally one'' as opposed to ''essentially one,'' now he contrasts things that are ''one metaphorically [*bi-'l-majāz*]'' to God, who is ''One in truth [*al-wāḥid bi-'l-ḥaqīqa*]'' or the ''true One [*al-wāḥid al-ḥaqq*].'' The meaning, however, is the same: what is ''metaphorically'' one is what is both one and many. The ''true One'' is only one, not at all multiple. In the rest of *On First Philosophy*, al-Kindī will therefore try to specify the sense of ''oneness'' that applies to God. However, he does this largely by enumerating the senses of ''one'' that do not apply to God. For this reason, al-Kindī's treatment of how we speak of God—what one might call ''theological discourse''—is usually thought of as being thoroughly negative. If this is right then in the end all al-Kindī has to say about God is that we can say nothing: He is utterly ineffable, inaccessible to language or thought. I think it would be more accurate to say that al-Kindī, in these final passages, is surveying the senses in which ''one'' might be understood, and narrowing down to the correct sense by a process of elimination. (Adamson, 2007, p. 53-54)

Al-Kindī's one-page description of the "Eternal" [al-Azalī] contains around forty Arabic negative particles. Simply put, God's being the cause [*ʿilla*] of creation makes Her uncaused, ineffable, unknowable, and utterly transcendent. She is the source of all multiplicity; and She is beyond the multiplicity and unity that belongs to creation. As the true One, She cannot be spoken of in the way creation is spoken of. "God, 'the true One,' is completely transcendent, in the precise sense that nothing can be said of Him." (Kars, 2019, p. 78)

Al-Kindī not only negates discursive proofs of the divine essence, but he also closes the door of any non-discursive access to God, including mysticism. God becomes utterly apophatic, inaccessible, and the unknowable ultimate cause and agent. (Kars, 2019, p. 81)

4 In this section devoted to "knowledge of the station of the transcendence of divine unity" [*maʿrifat manzil tanzīhiyya al-tawḥīd*], Ibn al-ʿArabī makes the philosophical argument that God's transcendence entails Her exemption from all possible human definitions, attributions, and traits, including Her very unity. Hence, "*We can say nothing about the word 'unity' when applied to God*." God is made free of any description through the word "unity"; in other words, "oneness" cannot qualify God if God is to be One. Divine unity is like a house that has no door, says Ibn al-ʿArabī; no one can enter this house, but some can merely peek inside via divine unveiling. (Kars, 2019, p. 101)

Ibn al-ʿArabī on Divine Majesty and Beauty:

His essence is exalted above all motions and stillnesses, all bewilderment and mindfulness. It is too high to be overtaken by any explanation, express or implied, just as it is too great to be limited and described. (Ibn al-ʿArabī Translated by Tosun Bayrak and Rabia T. Harris in Renard, 2014, p. 182)

5 For early Ismāʿīlīs, in line with Plotinus (d.270), God was the unknowable absolute One who can be neither comprehended by reason nor accurately described. Their doctrine removed all the attributes, including "being," from God, and unlike the majority of the Muʿtazilites, they kept Her essence utterly unknowable and ineffable. (Kars, 2019, p. 26)

Within this Ismāʿīlī cosmology, Ibn al-Wālid's God is utterly unknowable, far beyond comprehension, limitation, or definition. Discourse [*ʿibāra*] cannot reach anything about Her; anything that can be known or spoken of is created. The Originator is not a body, not a substance, not an accident, not a matter, not a form, not in space, not in time, not comparable to anything, not speakable, and so forth. (Kars, 2019, p. 55)

The ineffable God that I shall specifically be referring to throughout the collated papers is an

approximate representation of *al-Ghazālī's* view[7]. For *al-Ghazālī*, as Kars (2019) suggests, the

6 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī most famously had a distinctly negative approach to language concerning God. In the *Highest Aim* [*al- Maqṣad al-Asnā*], al-Ghazālī adopts all the principles of a philosophical apophaticism. The unknowability of the divine essence is strongly emphasized, again and again underlining that the highest knowledge concerning God is one's own incapacity to know—docta ignorantia. Not only divine essence but even divine attributes cannot be known to us as much as they relate to the divine essence. We can only imagine divine attributes through comparison with their created counterparts, but their reality is beyond human conception, imagination, and intellection. Contrasting negative and positive language concerning the divine essence, al-Ghazālī finds the former superior. Accordingly, negations contain a latent praise of God more powerful and correct than positively describing Her with qualified attributes:

> Since there is no likeness of Him, none knows His essence other than He. So al-Junayd . . . was right when he remarked: "*none knows God except God*." For that reason, He gave even His noblest creature a name, with which He veiled Himself, as He said: "Praise the name of your Lord Most High" [Q.87:1]. *So, by God, none knows God except God, in this world, or the next.*

> On his deathbed, Dhū al-Nūn was asked, "What do you long for?" He replied: "That I knew Him before I die—be it for an instant." Now, this confuses the hearts of most of the weak, and leads them to the delusion of negation [*nafy*] and ineffectualism [*taʿṭīl*]. . . . I say: if someone were to say "I do not know God," that would be true. And if they were to say "I know God" that would also be true. . . .

> This would be the case were a person to ask another, "Do you know Abū Bakr, the faithful one?" . . . If one replied, "Who does not know Abū Bakr, or is ignorant about him? Given the visibility, fame, and renown of his name, is it conceivable that anyone in the world doesn't know him? . . ." This reply would be true. . . .

> But if another were asked, "Do you know him [Abū Bakr, the faithful one]," and replied "Who am I to know the faithful one? Alas, far from it! None knows him except himself, or someone who is like him or above him. Who am I to claim to know him or even hope for that? People like me hear his name and attributes, but as for claiming to know him—that is impossible." *This is also true—indeed, this proposition has an aspect, which comes closer to the due glorification and homage.*

In the following discussion, al-Ghazālī gives other examples as well, in order to point out that the negative language is superior to positive language concerning the divine essence. His association of the negative language with praise, and the principle of unknowability, *none knows God except God*, clearly resonate with al- Baṭalyawsī, Maimonides, and the Arabic Aristotle among others. (Kars, 2019, p. 124-125)

7 It is worth noting that the sort of unknowability that I am ascribing to the Islamic God is not the kind that is manifested in *Ismāʿīlī* theology. The feature which distinguishes my idea of unknowability from *Ismāʿīlī* theology is that I don't think anything is impossible for an absolute transcendent God while they assume it is. The distinction that I am drawing on can be better appreciated in the extract below:

> From the beginning of their movement in the mid- third/ ninth century, Ismāʿīlī Shīʿites had developed a cosmology that was heavily influenced by a set of Neoplatonic ideas and that interpreted God's divine unity (*tawḥīd*) in a radical way. For Ismāʿīlī philosophers and theologians, *tawḥīd* meant that God is absolutely transcendent and cannot in any way be part of this world. He is beyond being and beyond knowability. God's absolute transcendence makes it impossible that He causes anything in His creation, since that would require some immanence on His part. (Griffel, 2017, p. 219)

unknowability of God's essence is indicative of our expressive inability. That means the very

fact that God's essence is beyond all human categories[8], any articulation of God, whether it be

positive or negative, would be contradictory. *Al-Ghazālī* seems to express this contradiction in

the following manner:

> If someone were to say "I do not know God," that would be true. And if they were to
>
> say "I know God," that would also be true. *Now it is known that negation and*
>
> *affirmation (of the same proposition) cannot both be true*, but rather split truth and
>
> falsity. If the negation is true then the affirmation is false, and vice versa. (*al-Ghazālī*
>
> in Kars, 2019, p. 162)[9]

If, as *al-Ghazālī* holds, we are unable to know God's essence, then we are incapable of

expressing anything about Him[10]. Yet, the very view that God is ineffable does just that.

Although, *al-Ghazālī* may not have articulated the contradiction in this particular manner, he

concedes that such matters are direct violations of the law of non-contradiction. "These

paradoxes are *real* rather than mere rhetorical tools or "seeming contradictions"; they do violate

the LNC, yet only at the propositional level" (Kars, 2019, p. 163). We thus gain a sense of the

---

8 God does not inhere in anything, and nothing inheres in Him. He is exalted above being contained by space, and too holy to be bounded by time; on the contrary, He existed before He created time and space. He now has [the attributes] by which He was [previously characterized], and is distinguished from His creatures by His attributes. There is not in His essence what is other than He, nor in what is other than He is there [anything of] His essence. He is exalted above change [of state] and movement. Originated things do not inhere [or subsist] in Him, and accidental [events] do not befall Him. Rather, He does not cease; through the qualities of His majesty He is beyond cessation, and through the attributes of His perfection He is independent of [or does not require] any further increase of perfection. (*al-Ghazālī* translated by Watt in Renard, 2014, p. 110)

9 Also see Heck, P., 2014. *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion*. Oxon: Routledge, pp.119.

10 Given the fact that — "God is a being necessarily existing of Himself (*al-mawjud al-wajib al-wujud bi-dhatihi*)" (*Maqsad* 47, M 342–43), it should be clear that this — "peculiar divine property belongs only to God and only God knows it." Moreover — "it is inconceivable that anyone know it save Him or one who is His like, since He has no like, no other knows it." On such an account, — "only God knows God" (*ibid*.). So the resources of philosophy confirm God's uniqueness or *tawhid*: the utter distinction of the One from all else: — "everything the exercise of which is possible," which does in fact exist from that One — "according to the best ways of order and perfection" (*Maqsad* 47, M 342). (Burrell, 1987, p. 181)

radical idea of ineffability that I am referring to here. It is the type that needs to be distinguished from weaker forms of ineffability. Weaker forms of ineffability are types that would be open to some form of concession in either defining or explaining away the contradiction[11].

I concede that from a theological perspective there is much to say about this position. However, as I have mentioned, I do not engage in a theological discourse beyond this point. The fact that there exists a notion of an ineffable God within the Islamic theological discourse, to which I have referred, suffices for my purpose. A subsequent point that requires addressing is why I have chosen a radical notion of an Islamic God. If God is radically ineffable, then it would be an unproductive view that cannot make any philosophical headway. It makes little sense to evaluate how well an Islamic analytic theology would fair against ambitions that conform to the prescriptive methods of analytic philosophy, if the theological topic is insusceptible to *any* philosophical method from the onset. Furthermore, would this radical notion of God be representative of the *entire* Islamic tradition?

The notion of God that I have selected is intended to be one that is inclusive of versions that are less radical. Allow me to explain. If the notion of an Islamic God is extremely radical on a given spectrum of ineffability, then (as I shall demonstrate) it is insusceptible to systems of classical and sub-classical logics and various accounts of formal truth. The notion of God which is expressive of an extreme form of radical ineffability would thus resist theoretical notions of logic and truth. Respectively, if the radicalness of the ineffability of God on this spectrum was reduced by the slightest, then it would, in some sense, make the notion of God susceptible to a system of logic and theoretical notion of truth. We needn't dwell on what kind of notion of God this would amount to, or even how, or in what sense it would prove receptive to a system of logic and theoretical notion of truth. It suffices to acknowledge that an extremely radical

---

11 I'm thinking of John Hick's idea of ineffability here. See Hick (2000).

notion of an Islamic God captures most, if not all, of the *less* radical versions of an Islamic God – whatever those may be. Thus, my choice of a radical notion of an Islamic God would *a fortiori* be inclusive of less radical versions of an Islamic God. Moreover, given the scope of my argument, speaking about the entire Islamic theological tradition is not possible. Considering a core theological topic, such as God, would seem like a plausible option. This is because, all religious matters are derived from God (His Word conveyed via divine scripture) in some way. If the notion of God is considered ineffable then it would imply that all religious derivations would also be ineffable. This would involve all of God's attributes for instance. From this perspective, my argument in virtue of an ineffable God would equally apply to all the theological derivations within the Islamic tradition.

To establish that an Islamic analytic theology, with a particular focus on an ineffable God, is not amenable with the prescriptive methods of analytic philosophy, I set out two complementary aims. These are met over the course of the five collated papers. The first is to demonstrate that making sense of an ineffable Islamic God in virtue of classical logic and various formal truth theories (under the purview of analytic philosophy) motivates a theological contradiction. The second is to offer a solution to this Islamic theological contradiction. The first aim occupies a substantial part of my thesis, namely, papers one, two, and three. In paper one, I lay the groundwork by demonstrating how an ineffable God leads to a contradiction. In paper two, I focus on how an ineffable God is not amenable with classical logic. In paper three, I focus on how an ineffable God is not amenable with substantive and insubstantive theories of truth. The second aim consists of two papers, namely, four and five. In paper four, I demonstrate how the Islamic theological contradiction, which we end up with, cannot be resolved by resorting to non-classical logics. Finally, in paper five, I offer a solution to the Islamic theological contradiction which I call 'Islamic Mystical Dialetheism'.

I shall now present a synopsis of each of the papers. Prior to this, it is important to note that although each of the five papers that constitute my thesis have a complementary aim, they are independent papers. This means that each paper is an independent piece of research that is self-contained with respect to its argument. As a result of this, overlap and repetition should be expected. One specific aspect that will be repeated throughout all the papers, is the notion of an ineffable God. In the first three papers, I offer the same account of an ineffable God. In the final two papers, I supplement the ineffability of God with a notion of unknowability. I present both notions of an unknowable and ineffable God in a uniform manner. Repetition in this regard is unavoidable. This is because I have chosen to work with this specific notion of God that is representative of a theological topic within the Islamic tradition.

References

Adamson, P. (2007). *Al-Kindī*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ahsan, A. (2020) Analytic Theology and its Method. *Philotheos*, 20(2), pp.

Baker-Hytch, M. (2016). Analytic Theology and Analytic Philosophy of Religion: What's the difference?. *Journal of Analytic Theology*, 4, pp.347-361.

Bayrak, T. and Harris, R. (2014). Ibn al-ʿArabī on Divine Majesty and Beauty. In: J. Renard, ed., *Islamic Theological Themes a primary source reader*. California: University of California Press, pp.181-186.

Burrell, D. (1987). The Unknowability of God in Al-Ghazali. *Religious Studies*, 23(2), pp.171-182.

Crisp, O. and Rea, M. ed. (2011). *Analytic Theology New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ghazālī's Ashʿarī Creed Translated by Watt, W. (2014). In: J. Renard, ed., *Islamic Theological Themes a primary source reader*. California: University of California Press, pp.109-113.

Griffel, F. (2017). *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Heck, P. (2014). *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion*. Oxon: Routledge.

Hick, J. (2000). Ineffability. *Religious Studies*, 36(1), pp.35-46.

Kars, A. (2019). *Unsaying God: Negative Theology in Medieval Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Priest, Graham, Francesco Berto, and Zach Weber, "Dialetheism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/dialetheism/>.

Rea, M. (2011). Introduction. In: O. Crisp and M. Rea, ed., *Analytic Theology New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology*, 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.1-30.

Rea, M. (2020). *Essays in analytic theology. Volume 1*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Synopsis of Each Paper

Paper 1: The Paradox of an Absolute Ineffable God of Islam

In this paper, I demonstrate how an ineffable God cannot be evaluated in virtue of analytic philosophy. I do this by firstly establishing that there are two fundamental components in virtue of which analytic philosophy makes sense of things. These include the laws of logic and two of the broader theories of truth. Secondly, I establish that despite the conceptual productivity of these components, they are unable to account for matters that are beyond them. These matters would include certain theological beliefs that transcend the purview of analytic ontology and the meaningfulness it ensues for instance. Any attempt in making rational sense of such beliefs that are insusceptible to these methodological components would conventionally prohibit (restrict) us from rationally believing in them. This is because we would be unable to make sense of such beliefs with the aid of these methodological components. As a result of this, theistic beliefs of this nature would be deemed irrational. I demonstrate this point by applying both components to an absolute ineffable God of Islam. This would entail, attempting to make sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam in virtue of the laws of logic and two broad categories of truth theories, namely, substantive and insubstantive theories. I establish that applying both methodological components in making sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam would not be conceptually viable. Doing so would result in a contradictory notion, which I shall allude to as the paradox of ineffability.

This paper intends to lay the groundwork for an Islamic contradictory theology. It outlines two methodological components of analytic philosophy that are responsible for purporting a contradiction. These are the laws of logic (more specifically, the law of non-contradiction) and

substantive and insubstantive theories of truth. In the subsequent two papers, I look at each of these components more closely and from different perspectives.

Paper 2: The Logical Inconsistency in Making Sense of an Ineffable God of Islam

In this paper, I focus on the first component, namely, the laws of logic. I demonstrate that the laws of logic are characterising features of classical logic. I specifically focus on the law of non-contradiction. I establish that the law of non-contradiction is not metaphysically neutral. Consequently, applying the law of non-contradiction via classical logic would impose metaphysical assumptions on an ineffable God of Islam. This would imply that there is an internal inconsistency when attempting to make sense of an ineffable God via classical logic. Although, my argument shall principally concern the Islamic theologian who espouses classical logic, I also consider non-classical logic and dialetheism. More importantly, my argument would prove applicable to earlier systems of logic. This is on the grounds that both systems of logic, namely, classical logic and preceding systems of logic, consider the laws of logic as defining features.

Paper 3: Beyond the Categories of Truth

In this paper, I focus on the second component, namely, substantive and insubstantive theologies of truth. I argue that an absolute ineffable God of Islam is contradictory beyond the ordinary categories (substantive or insubstantive) of truth. To demonstrate my thesis, I engage in a metaphysical and epistemological inquiry. In virtue of both inquires, I establish that the contradictory assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' cannot be false in a substantive or an insubstantive sense. The metaphysical inquiry comprises of two related phases. The first phase includes logical realism and anti-realism, while the second phase

includes ontological realism and ontological deflationism. I demonstrate that the contradictory assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' cannot be considered false in virtue of these outlooks for different reasons. The epistemological inquiry refers to epistemicism. I demonstrate that although this view infers an indeterminate truth-value of the contradictory assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable', it is incompatible with the notion of an absolute ineffable God of Islam. Considering both these inquires, it will become apparent that the contradictory assumption of an absolute ineffable God of Islam cannot be false in a substantive or insubstantive sense. This is because an absolute ineffable God of Islam transcends beyond these very categories of falsehood and truth.

Paper 4: Islamic Contradictory Theology . . . Is there any such thing

At this point, the problem of an Islamic contradictory theology is apparent. Moreover, the radical ineffability of God, representative of an Islamic theological topic, is clear. Given this, it might seem like a plausible move to apply paraconsistent logics to theological contradictions such as this one. This is a recent move found in the development of Christian analytic theology, referred to as 'Contradictory Christology'. This is a move proposed by Jc Beall in his (2019) paper entitled Christ – A Contradiction: A Defense of 'Contradictory Christology. More recently, he has a book on it entitled (2021) The Contradictory Christ. Beall proposes a solution to the fundamental problem of Christology. His solution aims at making the case, and defending the viability of, what he has termed, 'Contradictory Christology'. Although, Jc Beall's resolve may seem plausible in addressing an Islamic contradictory theology, I argue against it. That is, I make the case that there cannot be an Islamic contradictory theology. At least not the kind which replicates Beall's model under an a priori assumption that it will be amenable to a given Islamic theological contradiction. I do so by referring to Beall's defence of 'Contradictory Christology' as groundwork for a contradictory theology in general. I offer

two points to establish my claim. The first is that the Islamic theological contradiction does not entail an actual (logical) contradiction. The second is that FDE logic, including alternative sub-classical systems of logic, are not adequate in tolerating the Islamic theological contradiction.

Paper 5: Islamic Mystical Dialetheism Resolving the Paradox of God's Unknowability and Ineffability

In this paper, I offer a solution to the Islamic theological contradiction. Prior to proposing my solution, I establish that resorting to certain alternative views, such as metaphysical dialetheism, would not work. I offer various reasons for why this view would fail, and how it would prove inimical to the theological contradiction in question. Consequently, I propose an alternative type of dialetheism which aims to resolve the contradiction. I call this type of dialetheism, 'mystical dialetheism'. Mystical dialetheism posits the paradox of an unknowable and ineffable God as a true contradiction. The way in which it arrives at this postulation is by alluding to at least one interpretation in which there are polarities within revelationary facts about an unknowable and ineffable God. This specific interpretation proposes that we are observing instantiations of contradictions that constitute relevant pieces of evidence which, at best, allows us to infer a contradictory case of an unknowable and ineffable God. In such a case, we are not observing an instance of a contradictory God Himself. Rather, we are inferring an unknowable and ineffable God pertaining to non-observable domains from instantiations of specific contradictions situated in an observable domain. Yet the truth of this contradiction is not metaphysical. Nor can it be subject to philosophical theorising in any sense. Instead, it is a dialetheia that is ultimately grounded in the mystical.

PAPER 1

The Paradox of an Absolute Ineffable God of Islam

1. Introduction

Aside from the more intricate methodological disputes, analytic philosophy assumes certain methodological components that are essential to how it operates. These are the laws of logic and two broad categories of truth theories. Both of which are components that are employed to ensure theoretical rationality. Rationality is sought to be able to make sense of things in ways that are cognitively satisfying. Cognitive satisfaction, in this sense, has been an essential contributor in giving rise to variations of conceptual productivity. The kind that has been attributed to analytic philosophy since its birth. Predominantly, these variations of conceptual productivity are inclusive of being able to conceive and express our conceptions in ways that are ontologically quantifiable and thus meaningful. The laws of logic and two of the broader theories of truth are fundamental components that are responsible for ensuring such an ontology and meaningfulness. In this respect they have persisted as conventional attitudes or modes of thought which most, if not all, of analytic philosophy uses to philosophize. However, despite the conceptual productivity of these components, they are unable to account for matters that are beyond them. These matters would include certain theological beliefs that transcend the purview of analytic ontology and the meaningfulness it ensues for instance. Any attempt in making rational sense of such beliefs that are insusceptible to these methodological components would conventionally prohibit (restrict) us from rationally believing in them. This is because we would be unable to make sense of such beliefs with the aid of these methodological components. As a result of this, theistic beliefs of this nature would be deemed irrational.

I shall like to demonstrate this point throughout this paper. I shall do so by applying both components to an absolute ineffable God of Islam. This would entail, attempting to make sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam in virtue of the laws of logic and two broad categories of truth theories, namely, substantive and insubstantive theories. I hope to establish that applying both methodological components in attempting to make sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam would not be conceptually viable. It would result in a contradictory notion, which I shall allude to as the paradox of ineffability.

I establish this with the following argument:

1. In making sense of things, analytic philosophy typically assumes:

    (i)   The laws of logic

    (ii)   Substantive and/or insubstantive theories of truth

2. Applying both assumptions ((i) and (ii)) in making sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam would result in a paradox (of ineffability).

3. Therefore, making sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam in virtue of analytic philosophy would result in a paradox (of ineffability).

My argument shall reflect the structure of my paper. It will consist of three sections, each establishing the premises of my argument, respectively. The first section will focus on establishing how analytic philosophy assumes the laws of logic and substantive or insubstantive theories of truth in making sense of things. Much, although not all, of this section will be presented in a descriptive fashion to set the scene for what follows. A large part of what I shall draw on in the first section may seem somewhat apparent. Nonetheless, it is an integral part of my argument. It shall serve in laying the foundations upon which I shall build my argument in the subsequent section. The second section will focus on establishing premise two

of my argument. This section shall be the most important part of my argument. It will demonstrate how the application of both the methodological components (of analytic philosophy) fail in making sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam in ways that are paradoxical. Prior to demonstrating this, I shall explain what I mean by an absolute ineffable God of Islam. Thereafter, I shall demonstrate how the failure of each of the components in attempting to make sense of this ineffable God would result in the paradox of ineffability. The final section will offer a summary of the ground that has been covered in this paper and provide a brief account of how I have reached the conclusion that I have.

2. In making sense of things, analytic philosophy typically assumes:

    (i)   **The laws of logic**

    (ii)   **Substantive and/or insubstantive theories of truth**

One of the more notable projects of philosophical inquiry is attempting to make sense of things. Philosophy's role in this respect would be to exercise cognitive aptitudes in attempting to construe all that there is in an intelligible manner. Engaging with philosophy would thus involve trying to obtain a form of cognitive satisfaction. Aside from the sheer diversity of methodological approaches that lay claim to such kinds of cognitive satisfaction, it is usually considered to bear a strong affinity with rational order. Rescher (2017) makes this point in the following manner:

> The discipline [philosophy] seeks to bring rational order, system, and intelligibility to the often confusing diversity of our cognitive affairs enabling us to find our way about in the world in a practically effective and cognitively satisfying way. (Rescher, 2017, p. 33)

Rescher (2017) makes an unequivocal association between philosophy and the project of making sense of things. He does so while inferring that the abandonment of philosophy would imply withdrawing from the project of making sense of things[12]. Moore (2017) purports a similar view. For Moore "Philosophy is an attempt, by humans, from their unique position in the world, to make sense both of themselves and of that position" (Moore, 2017, p. 45). However, the phrase 'make sense' is ambiguous. Moore appreciates this by referring to it as "a polymorphous term". Elsewhere, while speaking on metaphysics, Moore (2012) draws on the meaning of the phrase 'to make sense of things'[13]. He proposes possible ways in which the phrase can be comprehended, such as the "meaning", "purpose", or "explanation" of something. Nevertheless, whatever understanding one derives from such synonyms, it would require further unpacking.

Given this, Moore goes on to make an important distinction between the ways in which the term 'to make sense' ought to be apprehended.

> When 'make sense' is used intransitively, there is a further range of associations. It is then equivalent not to 'understand' but to 'be intelligible', 'admit of understanding', perhaps even 'be rational'. (Moore, 2012, p. 5)

Considering Moore's view, it not only seems befitting, but somewhat intuitive, to conceive of 'making sense' in virtue of being rational – particularly within the purview of philosophy. It's

---

12 To those who are prepared simply to abandon philosophy, to withdraw from the whole project of trying to make sense of things, we can have little to say. (How can one reason with those who deny the pointfulness and propriety of reasoning?) (Rescher, 2017, p. 33)

13 The 'sense' in question may be the meaning of something, the purpose of something, or the explanation for something. This is connected to the fact that a near-synonym for 'make sense of' is 'understand' and the range of things that someone might naturally be said to understand (or not) is both vast and very varied. It includes languages, words, phrases, innuendos, theories, proofs, books, people, fashions, patterns of behaviour, suffering, the relativity of simultaneity, and many more. Thus making sense of things can embrace on the one hand finding something that is worth living for, perhaps even finding the meaning of life, and on the other hand discovering how things work, for instance by ascertaining relevant laws of nature. I do not want to draw a veil over *any* of these. The generality of metaphysics will no doubt prevent it from embracing some of them, but that is another matter. (Moore, 2012, p. 5)

worth noticing how he distinguishes 'make sense' from 'understand'. 'Making sense' and 'understanding' are surly synonymous terms in some ways. Although, as Moore puts it,

> . . . the range of things that someone might naturally be said to understand (or not) is both vast and very varied. It includes languages, words, phrases, innuendos, theories, proofs, books, people, fashions, patterns of behaviour, suffering, the relativity of simultaneity, and many more. Thus making sense of things can embrace on the one hand finding something that is worth living for, perhaps even finding the meaning of life, and on the other hand discovering how things work, for instance by ascertaining relevant laws of nature. (Moore, 2012, p. 5)

He appears to differentiate between an objective meaning of 'understand' and a working one. The distinction, along with what he means by both these perspectives, is rather apparent in the selected quote. For Moore then, the phrase 'make sense' should be conceived of as being susceptible to understanding[14]. A kind of understanding that involves ascertaining the functionalities of things and not one which is confined to discovering a purpose. The mode in which such functionalities of things may be determined bears a close affinity with rationality. One reason for associating the two terms 'making sense' and 'rationality' has to do with how we conceive of 'rationality'.

Rationality, in broader terms, is divided into theoretical and practical perspectives[15]. A theoretical perspective of rationality focuses on the epistemology of belief. It attempts to

---

14 I believe that the sense- making involved in philosophy, at least in philosophy of the best sort, is, quite literally, sense-*making*: not an exploration of something antecedently given, but a creation of something, most notably a creation of concepts by which to live . . . (Moore, 2017, p. 45)

15 The domain of rationality is customarily divided into the theoretical (see Robert Audi's chap. 2) and the practical. (Mele and Rawling, 2004, p. 3)

determine what qualifies as rational and whether it ought to be believed on such accounts of

rationality. A practical perspective of rationality focuses on determining which actions,

intentions, and desires qualify as rational. Given the nature of my argument, I shall only

concern myself with the theoretical perspective of rationality. Further variations of rationality

are primarily semantic differences. It is worth noting what these are since they bear a relevance

to my overall point. Hanna (2006) presents these by offering three basic distinctions[16] of

rationality. In sum of the three distinctions, he suggests that,

> The crucial three-way difference here is that whereas in the principled sense, rationality
>
> means generating or recognizing rules that are absolute or *unconditional*, in the holistic

---

16 The first basic distinction is between (a) the *mentalistic* sense of rationality and (b) the *procedural* sense of rationality. In the mentalistic sense, rationality is a complex psychological capacity for logical inference and insight, and also for practical deliberation and decision making. By contrast, in the procedural sense, rationality is a complex formal property of a certain class of mechanical, mathematical, computational, or logical processes, namely the property of being (i) well formed and (ii) either provable and recursive (Turing-computable), valid (truth-preserving), or sound (valid with true premises). The crucial difference here is that rationality in the mentalistic sense is such that all of its manifestations are conscious, whereas some process can quite easily be rational in the procedural sense without being in any way conscious.

The second basic distinction is between (c) the *meeting-the-minimalstandards* sense of rationality, and (d) the *meeting-the-maximal-or-idealstandards* sense of rationality. In the meeting-the-minimal-standards sense, rationality means either possessing a psychological capacity for rationality or meeting the well-formedness conditions for being a rational procedure of the relevant sort. By contrast, in the meeting-the-maximal-or-ideal-standards sense, rationality means either perfectly using a psychological capacity or else perfectly satisfying the provability/computability conditions, validity conditions, or soundness conditions of the relevant sort of rational procedure. The crucial difference here is that in the meeting-the-minimalstandards sense, irrationality means lacking the basic conditions necessary for rationality, and hence means *nonrationality*; whereas in the meeting themaximal- or-ideal-standards sense, irrationality merely means falling short of perfect rationality.

The third and last basic distinction is between (e) the *principled* sense of rationality, (f) the *holistic* sense of rationality, and (g) the *instrumental* sense of rationality. In the principled sense, rationality means the possession of a capacity for generating or recognizing necessary truths, a priori beliefs, strictly universal normative rules, nonconsequentialist moral obligations, and categorical "ought"-claims. Put in historical terms, this is the *Kantian* conception of rationality, acccording to which "reason is the faculty of a priori principles." By contrast, in the holistic sense, rationality means the possession of a capacity for systematically seeking coherence (or, to use a contemporary term of art, "reflective equilibrium") across a network or web of beliefs, desires, emotions, intentions, and volitions. In historical terms, this is the *Hegelian* conception of rationality, according to which "the truth is the whole." And finally, in the instrumental sense, rationality means the possession of a capacity for generating or recognizing contingent truths, a posteriori beliefs, contextually normative rules, consequentialist obligations, and hypothetical "ought"-claims. Put historically, this is the *Humean* conception of rationality, according to which "reason is the slave of the passions." (Hanna, 2006, p. xvi-xvii)

sense, by contrast, rationality means generating or recognizing rules or laws that are merely thoroughly interdependent or *mutually conditioned* (hence none of those rules or laws can have a greater degree of necessity or certainty, or be more binding, than the modally or epistemically weakest proposition in the total holistic network of rules or laws), and, by another contrast, rationality in the instrumental sense means generating or recognizing rules that are merely empirically regular or *conditional* (hence none of those rules or laws can be fully necessary or certain or binding). (Hanna, 2006, p. xvii-xviii)

For Hanna, there are rules that are conceived of in different ways, namely, unconditional, mutually conditioned, and conditional. Each of these constitutes a meaning of 'rationality' that is understood in different senses. It seems evident that 'rationality', irrespective of whichever sense you consider its meaning, cannot be conceived of in a *nonsensical* manner. The sense derived from each of the meanings of 'rationality' would inextricably be connected to how its respective rules are conceived of. If the rules happen to be conceived of in a nonsensical way, the result would be a nonsensical definition of 'rationality'. However, to ensure we arrive at a sensical meaning of 'rationality', it would require entities that possess adequate capacities in being able to conceive of the rules accordingly. But what exactly would such capacities entail? Let us, on the pain of circularity, refer to this as a rational capacity. This is on the grounds that the activity of making sense of 'rationality' requires a rational entity. Both are necessarily connected. In such a case, certain (normative) standards of rationality would be imposed upon entities that possess a rational capacity in making sense of 'rationality'.

A failure to meet those standards would result in irrationality on two accounts. The first would be a failure on the account of making sense of 'rationality'. The second would be a failure on the account of the entity, which possesses a rational capacity in upholding (normative)

standards of rationality, to be rational. I suppose it is on this second account which Donald Davidson (2004) states,

> "… irrationality is a failure within the house of reason. When Hobbes says only man has 'the privilege of absurdity' he suggests that only a rational creature can be irrational. Irrationality is a mental process or state – a rational process or state – gone wrong" (Davidson, 2004, p. 169).

Thus, any attempt in making sense in the absence of rationalising or vice versa, would result in irrationality. It would be an apparent failure to meet a prescribed standard that applies to rational entities.

Irrationality, however, is not synonymous with 'a-rational' or 'non-rational'[17]. 'A-rational' and 'non-rational' need to be contrasted with a different understanding of rationality. Kiesewetter (2017) has referred to this understanding of rationality as the 'capacity sense of rationality'. Rationality in this sense focuses on possessing the capacity of rationality or an activity of that capacity. "By 'rational capacity' we might just mean a certain set of capacities—such as the capacities of reflection and reasoning—that can be subsumed under the capacity of rationality.)" (Kiesewetter, 2017, p. 2). This understanding is not concerned with *entities* that possess a rational capacity. It merely ascribes the property of possessing a certain capacity. In virtue of this distinction, my cactus plant cannot be irrational. It is not an entity that possesses a rational capacity. Yet, my cactus plant may very well be a-rational or non-rational since it fails to possess the capacity of rationality or even to actively engage in that capacity.

---

17 'Rational' has at least two relevant senses: capable of reasoning ('RATIONAL', contrasting with 'a-rational' or 'non-rational') and: using this capacity properly or well ('rational ', contrasting with 'irrational'). 'Rational', in turn, has a stronger and a weaker interpretation: in conformity with the agent's goals and beliefs ('weak rationality') and: in conformity with the agent's reasonable goals and justified beliefs ('strong rationality'). (Haack, 1993, p. 177)

From the distinctions that I have referred to, it seems safe to say that one of the significant objectives of rationality is to systematize our thoughts in ways that allow us to obtain cognitive satisfaction. This cognitive satisfaction is achieved by attempting to make sense of things, which in turn, is one of the more notable projects of philosophy. Such an enterprise, from a universal perspective, would conceptually resist forms of irrationality while meticulously seeking to shed intelligible light on fundamental questions. Audi (2011) speaks of this sort of rationality as a global one, which is " . . . a kind of making sense (not being "crazy"), as where we say "Thank God he's rational again after the accident" or, for focal cases, "That view makes sense, but can you give a good argument for it?"" (Audi, 2011, p. 16)

2.1 The laws of logic

If we are to conceive of rationality in the most basic sense of the word, then it would have to conform to some universal principles. This is for two reasons. Firstly, these principles would be fundamental in allowing rationality to fulfil its essential role of reasoning. These principles would be fundamental in the sense that their defiance would result in irrationality. Secondly, from a reductionist position, if the term 'rationality' is to receive a kind of global appreciation, then it would need to function in virtue of some principles. These principles would need to be considered as universal principles to avoid drawing on exceptional cases that would serve as counterexamples. In sum of these reasons, rationality presupposes a set of normative principles. The sort which determines the content of what we *ought* to think and the process of how we *ought* to reason.

These fundamental principles or axioms that I am referring to are the laws of logic. Audi has alluded to this in the following manner, "Our illustrations make it plain that global rationality requires a certain minimal internalization of basic principles of logic, deductive and inductive."

(Audi, 2011, p. 17) For Audi it seems far too obvious for anyone to seriously doubt that rationality at odds with logic is irrational. With regards to how things stand, at least for the majority, rationality's association with the laws of classical logic is essentially what makes rationality *rational*. These laws are the fundamental components that allow rationality to fulfil its essential role of reasoning[18]. In other words, adherence to the laws of classical logic would prevent rationality from becoming irrational. There are those of course who adopt an alternative position such as Priest (2006)[19].

The laws of classical logic are commonly identified as:

1. The law of identity: $\alpha \equiv \alpha$

2. The law of non-contradiction: $\neg (\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha)$

3. The law of excluded middle: $\alpha \vee \neg\alpha$

These laws, within the purview of classical logic, have been considered as foundational axioms that are necessary for being rational. This is what Fogelin (2003) has implied. It is, for him, a central idea in how he understands Aristotle's account of intellectual virtues. "To be rational" according to Frogelin (2003), one must "conform to the laws of logic" (Frogelin, 2003, p. 18). It should be noted however that the law of identity is more specifically attributed to Leibniz[20].

---

18 This is based on the view that the status of logic is normative.

19 Consistency has been taken to be the very cornerstone of rationality. But this view has itself no rational ground: it would seem to be simply the legacy of Aristotle. Indeed an inconsistent view may be the very embodiment of rationality. (Priest, 2006, p. 129)

20 Feldman (1970) has explored whether the law of identity was actually formulated by Leibniz. He concludes that Leibniz did not present any version of it; however, there is one reason for why it is associated with him. Feldman goes on to articulate this reason. What is more pertinent in this case however is what he states in the opening of his paper. This reads as follows:

A certain fundamental view about identity is associated with Leibniz. Many contemporary philosophers call the principle which expresses this view "Leibniz' Law." Some even go further and speak of "Leibniz-identity" or "identity in Leibniz' sense." One particularly explicit statement of the more moderate point can be found in Tarski's

The law of non-contradiction[21] and excluded middle, on the other hand, have been expressed by Aristotle in his Metaphysics[22]. Although many of Aristotle's views have been contested since antiquity, the law of non-contradiction, for the most part, has championed an authoritative role. Priest (2006) sums this up rather succinctly in the following manner:

> With the exception of Hegel and his fellow-travellers, and whilst Aristotle's opinion on nearly every other matter has been overturned—or at least challenged—nearly every Western philosopher and logician has accepted the authority of Aristotle on this matter. There is hardly a defence of the Law since Aristotle's, worth mentioning. (Priest, 2006, p. 7)

According to Priest (2006) Aristotle's view regarding the law of non-contradiction has been upheld as high orthodoxy since the medieval times. The West, in particular, has considered this law to be incontrovertible to the extent that they have not felt the need to provide any further

---

Introduction to Logic: "Among the logical laws concerning the concept of identity the most fundamental is the following: x = y if, and only if, x has every property which y has, and y has every property which x has. This law was first stated by LEIBNIZ (although in somewhat different terms) and hence may be called LEIBNIZ' LAW." Tarski did not provide a reference to the place where, according to him, Leibniz stated that law. In fact, it is not at all clear just where or how Leibniz is supposed to have stated this principle, even though a great many philosophers assume that he did state it somewhere and somehow. (Feldman, 1970, p. 510)

21 The classic source of much thought about contradiction comes from Aristotle's Book Γ of the *Metaphysics*. (Beall, 2004, p. 2)

22 The most indisputable of all beliefs is that contradictory statements are not at the same time true (Met. 1011b13-4). It is impossible for any one to believe the same thing to be and not to be, as some think like Heraclitus says. (Met. 1005b23-5) A thing cannot at the same time be and not be (Met. 996b29-30)

Our text, then, is *Metaphysics Γ*, 1003*a* 21–1012*b*34 (future references are abbreviated). The arguments we are concerned with occur largely in chapter 4, but let us start with a quick look at the whole book. In the first three chapters Aristotle explains that there is a study whose job is to investigate the most fundamental features of "being *qua* being", i.e. the properties that all entities have merely in virtue of being entities. It turns out that these are the Laws of Non- Contradiction (LNC) and Excluded Middle (LEM). (Priest, 2006, p. 8)

evidence for it[23]. This attitude has not merely persisted, but is actively, as Beall (2004) puts it,

"an entrenched 'unassailable dogma' of Western thought" (Beall, 2004, p. 3).

Analytic philosophy has demonstrated this point evidently. Its emergence and development in the early part of the twentieth century is, on the most part, a product of a new system of logic. Although, the rise of analytic philosophy is usually associated with a linguistic turn that is driven by anti-metaphysical initiatives. Despite the hostility that was directed at metaphysics by the inauguration of analytic philosophy, we find as Beaney (2012) has pointed out, that its founding fathers engaged with metaphysical conceptions in different respects[24]. Nonetheless, metaphysics bears a close relationship with logic that has proved to be central throughout the history of analytic philosophy. In fact, logic is foundational for much of metaphysics. Beaney (2012) has referred to Micheal Dummett in this respect, who upheld that "it is logic that provides the basis for metaphysics rather than the other way round . . ." (Beaney, 2012, p. 257).

---

23 But it is fair to say that, at least since the Middle Ages, Aristotle's views concerning contradiction have been orthodoxy. (This is so obvious, that it is hardly worth documenting.) They are taken for granted so much that, as far

as I know, there is no sustained defence of the LNC in Western philosophy other than Aristotle's. Why? I really don't know. It is certainly not because of the rational persuasiveness of Aristotle's arguments. I suspect (unhappily) that the view was accepted simply on the basis of the magisterial authority of Aristotle's texts in the Middle Ages. In general, that authority disappeared long ago, of course. In logic it hung on till the twentieth century; most of it there has been swept out since then, but the views about contradiction have hung on doggedly. (Priest, 2006, p. 121)

24 If we look at the work of the four founders of analytic philosophy, Frege, Russell, Moore, and Wittgenstein, we find metaphysical conceptions at the heart of their endeavours. Frege, for example, regarded numbers and the truth-values as logical objects. Russell and Moore in their early work developed a realist view of propositions. Even when Russell abandoned the metaphysics of propositions in his later work, this was replaced by a metaphysics of facts. Wittgenstein, in the *Tractatus*, articulated a raft of theses that seem paradigmatically metaphysical. This author outlines some of the key metaphysical conceptions of Frege, Russell, Moore, and the early Wittgenstein, and explores the connections with their logical views. It also discusses the status of the metaphysical statements that Frege and Wittgenstein, in particular, found themselves making. (Beaney, 2012, p. 257)

Gottlob Frege is considered as one of the founding fathers of analytic philosophy. He was predominantly concerned with establishing logicism. Logicism is the thesis that arithmetic is reducible to logic. Frege's initial book, *Begriffsschrift* which was published in 1879, is testimony to his profound engagement with the logicism programme. His attempt in achieving this, motivated him to formulate a more powerful system of logic than the traditional Aristotelian logic (syllogistic theory) that had been dominant prior to him[25]. This new system of logic, namely first-order predicate logic/predicate calculus, involves devising (existential and universal) quantifier notations and integrating the propositional calculus. It proves to be a sophisticated system of logic in the sense that it grants quantifying over more complex statements. It operates by way of "function-argument analysis" as Beaney (2012) puts it. This can be distinguished from the traditional subject-predicate analysis.

This extended function appeared to convince Frege that quantificational logic managed to represent reality with the same degree of certainty and objectivity that mathematics offered[26]. For Frege this meant that quantificational logic possesses a mathematical proficiency in quantifying over the things that are situated in reality. However, mathematics itself needed to be founded upon certain underlying principles or axioms that would permit the kind of certainty and objectivity it is commonly associated with. This was about demonstrating ". . . how to arrive at justified knowledge of mathematics from antecedent knowledge of the underlying

---

25 The relationship between them is by no means simply that of primitive to more sophisticated (though modern logic is indeed more sophisticated), nor is it simply that Fregean logic *replaced* traditional logic, rebuilding from scratch and ignoring all the old ideas. Modern logic is neither completely different nor a straightforward expansion of the old, and a detailed comparison of the two yields valuable insights. The transition from one conceptual 'paradigm' to another is always fascinating, and the overthrow of syllogistic theory by Fregean logic is as important in logic as the Copernican revolution in astronomy or the change from Newtonian to quantum mechanics in physics. (Beaney, 1996, p. 7)

26 Frege's main goal in philosophy was to ground the certainty and objectivity of mathematics in the fundamental laws of logic, and to distinguish both logic and mathematics from empirical science in general, and from the psychology of human reasoning in particular. (Soames, 2014, p. 4)

principles" (Soames, 2014, p. 30-31). The accuracy to which such antecedent principles give rise to would be conditional upon their very accuracy. If mathematical truths are derived from underlying principles and axioms that are considered 'primary', in the sense that all other truths are derived from them, then they would be indicative of corresponding truths.

For Frege these underlying principles or axioms were the fundamental laws of logic. The laws of logic were, as he put it, "laws on which all knowledge rests". As important as these laws served to be for Frege, he did not appear to provide any compelling evidence to suggest how they were known to be *true*. Although he entertains this question, he does not present a substantive or insubstantive case for the laws being true themselves and nor for our upholding them as true[27]. He does, however, claim to have provided some *ground* for holding these laws of logic as true. Nonetheless, this is hardly satisfactory. Soames (2014) recapitulates Frege's outlook in the following manner:

> Some logical principles are justified by deriving them from other, more fundamental ones. The process of justification ends with the most basic logical laws, which are self-evidently true, and knowable without any further justifying reason. In addition to being self-evident, Frege takes these fundamental laws to be the most pragmatically significant general truths underlying all of our reasoning. (Soames, 2014, p. 31)

---

27 Now the question of why and with what right we acknowledge a logical law to be true, logic can only answer by reducing it to another logical law. Where that is not possible, logic can give no answer. Leaving aside logic, we may say: we are forced to make judgments by our nature and external circumstances; and if we make judgments, we cannot reject this law—of identity, for example; we must recognize it if we are not to throw our thought into confusion and in the end renounce judgment altogether. I do not wish to either dispute or endorse this view and only remark that what we have here is not a logical implication. What is given is not a ground [reason] for [something's] being true, but of our holding [it] as true. (Frege quoted in Soames, 2014, p. 31)

It is evident from Soames's (2014) passage that Frege considered the laws of logic as self-evident truths that did not require the need for any further justification. Frege in a famous passage is quoted to have said that "the laws of truth are not psychological laws: they are boundary stones fixed in an eternal foundation, which our thinking can overflow, but never displace" (Frege quoted in Rumfitt, 2017, p. 1). Rumfitt (2017) goes on to clarify that for Frege the 'laws of truth' *are* the 'laws of logic'. The laws of logic, as Frege depicted them, are to be understood as entrenched 'boundary stones' that are set in an 'eternal foundation'. It's not exactly clear what he means by an 'eternal foundation' here. According to Beaney (1996), "Frege assumed that these laws were transcendentally given" (Beaney, 1996, p. 15).

Frege eventually abandoned his logicism project after receiving a letter from Bertrand Russell. Russell has pointed out a paradox (which came to be known as Russell's paradox) in Frege's project. Thereafter, Russell dedicated the next decade of his life in trying to resolve the paradox. He was determined to show how logicism could overcome the contradiction that arose therein. Russell developed a theory of types which attempted to provide a philosophical justification for the kinds of responses he offered in resolving the paradox. The details and degree of his success bears little relevance here. Nonetheless, what is relevant is that he adhered to the laws of logic in doing so. In fact, so did Frege. This can be acknowledged from the mere fact that Russell had identified a contradiction in Frege's logicism programme. For Russell to have considered a contradiction to be conceptually intolerable, and thus problematic, clearly implies that he adhered to the laws of logic. Moreover, for Frege to have abandoned his logicism programme after he had acknowledged the contradiction also suggests that he too adhered to the laws of logic. Frege's abandonment of the logicism programme bears testimony that he conceded to having defied the laws of logic.

Moreover, for Russell, the truths of the laws of logic were central in obtaining coherence[28]. If any of these laws are opposed, then it would result in inconsistency. However, with regards to the coherence of the laws themselves, Russell appeared to have circumvented the issue. He did so by diverting his readers' attention to the consequence of not adhering to the laws as opposed to providing evidence for them[29].

Considering Frege's and Russell's initiatives, it is clear that the laws of logic have been held in very high regard. It is a different matter, although a very interesting one, as to whether they succeeded in providing sufficient evidence for upholding the laws of logic in the uncompromising way they did. Nevertheless, this outlook with regards to the laws of logic has continued to persist, for the most part, in the development of analytic philosophy. It may be contested, however, that the way analytic philosophy stands today is not entirely representative of Frege's and Russell's initiatives that took place at the turn of the twentieth century. Analytic philosophy has considerably moved on since then and is continuing to evolve in different respects. Thus, to present analytic philosophy in virtue of certain projects that are distinctively representative of its initiation, and not how it stands today, would be a mischaracterization of analytic philosophy.

---

28 The other objection to this definition of truth is that it assumes the meaning of 'coherence' known, whereas, in fact, 'coherence' presupposes the truth of the laws of logic. Two propositions are coherent when both may be true, and are incoherent when one at least must be false. Now in order to know whether two propositions can both be true, we must know such truths as the law of contradiction. For example, the two propositions, 'this tree is a beech' and 'this tree is not a beech', are not coherent, because of the law of contradiction. But if the law of contradiction itself were subjected to the test of coherence, we should find that, if we choose to suppose it false, nothing will any longer be incoherent with anything else. Thus the laws of logic supply the skeleton or framework within which the test of coherence applies, and they themselves cannot be established by this test. (Russell, 2008, p. 81)

29 See note 16.

This is a pertinent point which cannot be disregarded. The beginning phase of analytic philosophy and the projects it has been associated with are not to be taken as parallel representations of how analytic philosophy is conceived of in contemporary times[30]. This is not to infer that they are two distinct enterprises either. The plethora of divergent ideas and literature that has emerged in more recent times, by those who brand themselves as analytic philosophers, are in some ways indicative of earlier philosophical themes. This may be apparent in some respects more than others. However, it would be difficult to completely overlook the incidental association between the more contemporary developments and its beginnings.

My point, nevertheless, is to do with how adherence to the laws of logic has candidly persisted throughout the birth and continuing evolution of analytic philosophy. Despite the sheer contrasting positions that surround analytic philosophy from its inception to current times, it seems evident that its major proponents, for the most part, have adhered to the laws of logic. The adherence to the laws of logic can be traced back to its founding fathers, namely Frege and Russell, as I have demonstrated. Most contemporary analytic philosophers have also manifested a somewhat unwavering attitude in this respect[31]. It's safe to say that such an

---

30 Faced with these developments, one might wonder whether it makes sense to talk of 'analytic philosophy' any longer; as Frege once remarked, the wider the extension of a term, the less content it has (1884,§29). Wanting to restrict the label to the early phase of the tradition, some have argued that analytic philosophy had exhausted itself by the 1970s (at the latest), and that we are now in a 'post-analytic' age. These views, however, do not reflect the widespread use of 'analytic philosophy' to refer to much contemporary philosophy, and the term 'early analytic philosophy' has been introduced to refer to the early period. It seems best, then, to respect the current use of the term as much as possible and treat analytic philosophy as a tradition that is healthier and stronger today, albeit more diverse, than it has ever been in the past. Certainly, a concern with the *history* of analytic philosophy should err on the side of inclusiveness. Even if there are some philosophers, schools of thought, or periods that some would wish to exclude from the tradition, their relationship to analytic philosophy, on whatever narrower conception is favoured, will still be relevant in understanding the nature and development of analytic philosophy, so conceived. (Beaney, 2015, p. 5-6)

31 Already when I worked on modal logic it had seemed to me, as Wiggins has said, that the Leibnitzian principle of the indiscernibility of identicals was as self-evident as the law of contradiction. (Kripke, 2001, p. 3)

attitude towards the laws of logic have been upheld for the sake of being able to make sense of things. From this perspective the laws of logic have been prerequisites for being able to make sense of things. They have allowed analytic philosophers to rigorously pursue analytic ambitions[32]. These ambitions have supposedly helped analytic philosophy in being able to make sense of things that prove to be thorough and precise.

2.2 Logic presupposes a notion of truth

Logic has proved to be the cornerstone upon which most, if not all, analytic philosophy has been founded. Logic is one of the essential contributors which grants analytic philosophy the

---

We cannot, I think, ever make sense of someone's accepting a plain and obvious contradiction: no one can believe a proposition of the form (*p* and not-*p*) while appreciating that the proposition is of this form. (Davidson, 2004, p. 198)

In standard logic, a contradiction is said to imply everything. Thus there are valid arguments in which the premises seem irrelevant to the conclusion: for instance, when a contradiction about the weather implies any conclusion you like about the economy. Most logicians, and I for one, think this situation unproblematic; but some think it very objectionable, and so there is a flourishing industry of building systems *of* 'relevant logic' in which this supposedly objectionable thing will not happen. (Lewis, 1998, p. 2-3)

32 Rea (2011) provides two sets of ambitions of analytic philosophy. These are as follows:

First set

    1. . . . to identify the scope and limits of our powers to obtain knowledge of the world', and

    2 . . . to provide such true explanatory theories as we can in areas of inquiry (metaphysics, morals, and the like) that fall outside of the scope of the natural sciences.

Second Set

    1. Write as if philosophical positions and conclusions can be adequately formulated in sentences that can be formalized and logically manipulated.

    2. Prioritize precision, clarity, and logical coherence.

    3. Avoid substantive (non-decorative) use of metaphor and other tropes whose semantic content outstrips their propositional content.

    4. Work as much as possible with well-understood primitive concepts, and concepts that can be analysed in terms of those.

    5. Treat conceptual analysis (insofar as it is possible) as a source of evidence.

theoretical aptitude to make sense of things. Similarly, analytic philosophy bestows much emphasis on expressing its content by way of logical rigor. However, logic alone is not sufficient in achieving this. There is something that presupposes logic. This is the notion of truth. The collaboration between the notion of truth and logic is what allows analytic philosophy to succeed in making sense of things in a way that is cognitively satisfying. Although both components are essential for analytic philosophy to succeed in making sense of things, they are not to be conflated[33]. Allow me to draw the distinction between them which is rather important for my purposes.

Logic is the study of various methods and principles that are primarily concerned with distinguishing good reasoning from bad. For logic to achieve this goal it primarily engages with arguments that are representative of how one goes about reasoning. An argument, in its basic form, is comprised of one conclusion (a proposition) and reasons (premises) to support that conclusion. The premises and conclusion that constitute an argument are what constitutes its logical form. The logical form is a structure that represents a specific sequence which seeks to determine logical consistency or inconsistency. The individual premises and conclusion that constitute the logical form are not representative of any truth-value that establishes how the

---

33 To say that logic is primarily concerned with truth and not with reasoning would be inaccurate. Smith (2012) makes this claim where he states that "Logic, then, is primarily concerned with truth, not with reasoning" (Smith, 2012, p. 4). This inaccuracy would be one which disregards the subtle distinction between reasoning and truth. These are two distinct features. It is one thing to try and determine the truth of the opening premise and quite another to consider whether it sequentially moves to the subsequent premise and then to its conclusion. Smith (2013) draws on this distinction in the following manner:

> The premisses (and conclusions) of arguments can be about all sorts of topics: their truth is usually no business of the logician. If we are arguing about historical matters, then it is the historian who is the expert about the truth of our premisses; if we are arguing about some matter of physics, then the physicist is the one who can help us about the truth of our premisses; and so on. The specific concern of logic, by contrast, is not the truth of initial premisses but *the way we argue from a given starting point*. Logic is not about whether our premisses are true, i.e. match up to the world, but about whether our inferences really do support our conclusions once the premisses are granted. It is in this sense that logic is concerned with the 'internal cogency' of our reasoning. (Smith, 2013, p. 2)

world is or is not. Instead, they are like blank canvases which are reserved for contents that have a truth-value.

Logic's primary objective, in this respect, is to determine whether the conclusion sequentially follows from the premises that are presented in its support. This means it focuses on the inferential steps that move from the premises to their conclusion. It does this by evaluating the logical form of an argument and not its truth-value. If the logical form of an argument is one that sequentially follows, then it would be considered a valid argument. Otherwise, it would be an invalid argument. The contents along with its truth-value, which make up the premises and conclusion, are irrelevant in determining the validity of an argument. As a matter of fact, you needn't know what the premises and conclusion even mean to be able to determine its validity[34]. Accordingly, it would be a technical error to describe the form of an argument as true or false. The truth-value of an argument is exclusively associated with the individual premises and conclusion that constitute an argument and not its form.

There is a distinction then between the logical form of an argument and the truth-value of each of the premises and conclusion. In other words, knowing the truth-value of the premises and conclusion would not contribute in telling us anything about the validity of an argument except in one notable case. This is when you have true premises and a false conclusion. In this case the argument would be invalid. In all the other combination of cases, knowing the truth-value of the premises and conclusion would not tell us anything about its validity. The exceptional case whose validity depends on its truth-value is representative of the law of non-contradiction. To appreciate this all one must do is accept the premises of any given argument as true and

---

34 The specific content of the premise and the conclusion is not relevant to the determination of the validity of the arguments. Not only do you not need to know the actual truth-value of the premises and conclusions of an argument to determine its validity you do not even need to know what they mean. (Newton-Smith, 1985, p. 7)

deny its conclusion. This would lead to an implicit contradiction. Consequently, it would imply that there is at least one inference which is *necessarily* true without the support of any further evidence. This inference, namely the law of non-contradiction, serves as one of the more fundamental ways in determining whether the form of an argument is logically consistent. If the form of an argument denies the law of non-contradiction, then its structure cannot be a logically consistent one.

An alternative way to understand my point is by taking any given argument which comprises of a conclusion (a proposition) and reasons (premises) to support that conclusion. When we usually think of arguments of this kind we would, quite naturally, assume that the minimum reasons required to support a conclusion can be no less than one. However, this is not the case. The answer is none. This means that there can be a conclusion which stands completely on its own; independent of reasons that support it. This would, of course, defy the very construct of an argument because it fails to present any reasons in support of the purported conclusion. Nevertheless, when such conclusions are taken independently, without the support of reasons, it implies that nothing goes against the conclusion and therefore it can be upheld without any reasons. This sort of conclusion is referred to as a self-evident truth.

One of the most common self-evident truths is known as the law of non-contradiction. It simply states that it cannot be the case that something is both the case and not the case at the same time. Such a truth is, and has been since the days of Aristotle, considered to be so glaringly obvious that it does not to require anything to support it. More pertinently, it is considered as a kind of truth which has no opposing reasons to reject it or even call its authenticity into question. This means *everything* supports it while *nothing* contradicts it. Modus Ponens and Modus Tollens are clear examples of this. The validity of such argument-forms serve as

basic inferential rules of classical logic that are representative of the fundamental laws of logic. The validity of both these argument-forms are just as fundamental as the laws of logic that they stand for. Additionally, if the conditional premises that make up the forms of these arguments are true, then their conclusion cannot be otherwise. So given that the forms of these arguments are clear representations of the laws of logic, their validity is certain. This qualifies the law of non-contradiction and the law of excluded middle as self-evident truths that must always be true and cannot be false.

Therefore, subscribing to the laws of logic would mean that I hold them to be *true*. In such a case I would declare that a contradiction must always be *false*, and a tautology must always be *true*. My acceptance of these fundamental axioms would then demand that I accept the outcome of whatever inferentially follows from these axioms. Accepting the laws of logic to be true while denying the conclusion would result in an explicit contradiction. Thus, it would mean that my presumption of logic presupposes a notion of truth (and falsehood). The corollary of what I have drawn on so far establishes the distinction between logic and truth. Moreover, it manifests how logic presupposes truth in a fundamental way. Consequently, for logic to be able to make sense of things, particularly within the tradition of analytic philosophy, it would have to subscribe to a notion of truth.

2.3 Substantive and/or insubstantive theories of truth

Matters of truth occupy an indispensible position within philosophical discourse. While the notion of truth possesses a ubiquitous nature that pervades almost every aspect of what constitutes our ordinary lives, it appears to bear a special relationship with philosophy. The significance of such a connection would primarily include potency on the part of truth in being able to determine the soundness of philosophical conclusions. Deliberations centred in and

around matters of truth would, in this regard, act as determining factors as to how one goes about practicing and engaging with philosophy. It would actively constitute and fall within the remit of meta-philosophy which is responsible for shaping the very methods by which one philosophises. In this respect, truth deserves serious intellectual attention, especially if it has the potential in fundamentally influencing the consequences we strive to reach by way of philosophical argumentation. Trakakis (2013) makes an apt reference to John Sallis in this regard where he notes that "It is not as though philosophy is first delimited as such and then brought to bear on the question of truth; rather, the way in which the question of truth is addressed, the way in which truth is determined as such, determines the very project of philosophy." (Trakakis, 2013, p. 367)

There is an extensive range of truth theories within philosophical literature. I wish to focus on two of the broader types of truth that have received considerable attention within the purview of analytic philosophy[35], namely substantive and insubstantive theories of truth. To be more specific, I shall consider correspondence theories and deflationary theories of truth that are types of substantive and insubstantive theories respectively. Although each of these types of truth theories are further divided up into specific subcategories, I will not engage with those. For my argument, it shall suffice to consider the correspondence and deflationary theories in their generic sense which would be inclusive of their subcategories.

---

35 Analytic philosophy in the twentieth century, from its realist beginnings with Frege, Russell and Moore and its attempts during the logical positivist period to demarcate science from metaphysics, to its contemporary attraction for naturalism and scientific realism, illustrates the permanent appeal of talk in terms of truth and associated notions such as correspondence or verification. A major, and striking, difference between this tradition and the tradition known as "Continental philosophy" is that analytic philosophers have devoted a lot of effort to trying to account for the meaning of the simple word "true", and to discuss the various possible "theories of truth". They want to know what it means to say that our theories of the world are true, and whether they can be said to be so. They do not doubt that philosophers can play a major role in elucidating this. So they have investigated whether truth can be defined as correspondence between our statements and reality, or whether it could be defined as a form of coherence between our statements, or whether it can be defined, in the pragmatic sense, as a way of saying that a statement is useful or beneficial. In fact most of the history of twentieth-century analytic philosophy is a sort of battlefield opposing various "realist" and "anti-realist" conceptions of truth. (Engel, 2002, p. 4)

The correspondence theories of truth are founded upon the central idea that truth is a relational property. This relational property is one that something has in virtue of its relationship to something else. It functions as a conjunctive between two or more entities. A correspondence between a claim on the one hand and the way reality is perceived on the other is what amounts to truth. In other words, when a successful correspondence occurs between a given claim and reality it would result in truth. Conversely, the absence of correspondence would result in falsity. In both cases the truth and falsity would be substantive truth-values. Take for instance my claim that 'snow is white'. If it turns out that the world we live in is such where snow is actually white, then my claim will be true. This would mean that reality substantiates my claim about the whiteness of snow. This would reveal a correspondence relation between my claim and the actual colour of snow. On the contrary, if the world was different and the reality of snow was to exhibit a colour other than white, while there were zero instances of white snow, then my claim will be false. This would mean that reality substantiates my claim about the non-whiteness of snow. The claim itself will still be a substantive claim. This is because the way in which I have arrived at the falsity of this matter is substantive. Therefore, the determining factor as to whether a claim is either true or false, is grounded in the existence or non-existence of a correspondence relation between the claim and reality.

It is worth noting that in such a case my claim cannot enjoy a truth-value without having been substantiated by how the world actually is or is not. My claim, and even the mere thought of snow, being white would not possess the causal efficacy in determining the reality of snow to be or not to be that colour even if it already is that colour. Instead, the determining factor with respect to the colour of snow lies with the reality of snow itself and not with my conception of it. This implies that the contents of our thoughts are true in virtue of a mind-independent reality. To put it slightly differently, it infers that the contents of our thoughts cannot be deemed true

or false in virtue of a mind-dependent reality. Engel (2002) sums up this idea of correspondence and the idea of realism in the following manner:

> A correspondence conception of truth is often called a *realist* conception in the following sense: it says that our thoughts are true *in virtue* of something that is distinct from them, and independent from our thinking and knowing of them. In this sense, the truth of a statement is also supposed to *transcend* our possible knowledge of it, or its verification. In opposition, we may call *anti-realist* any conception of truth according to which truth does not transcend our cognitive powers, and is constrained by some epistemic condition. (Engel, 2002, p. 14-15)

A realist outlook in matters of epistemology is indicative of a correspondence notion of truth[36]. It holds that our conceptions and expressions of a mind-independent reality are true in virtue of bearing a correspondence relation. If such a relation between the mind and the world cannot be determined to be or not to be the case in any robust way, then truth would be a metaphysically vacuous notion. In this sense, truth would be a mere logical devise that would make generalizations over an infinite number of propositions. This is a view which deflationary theorists subscribe to.

Deflationary theories, in contrast to correspondence theories, take a very different approach. For the deflationist truth is not a genuine property. Nor does it possess any substantive or robust metaphysics which allows it go beyond the semantics of what is being asserted. This means

---

36 . . . I want to explain why I call this a realist conception. Though 'realism' is more commonly used for one or another metaphysical position, I find it appropriate to call this conception of truth 'realist'. The reason is this. What it takes to render a statement true is something that is objective vis-à-vis that statement, namely, a fact involving what the statement is about. The truth value of the statement depends on how it is with "the world" "beyond" the statement rather than on some feature of the statement itself. In particular, and looking forward to the main competitor of the realist conception, truth value does not depend on the epistemic status of the statement, whether it is justified, warranted, counts as an expression of knowledge, or coheres with some system or other. (Alston, 2001, p. 41-42)

that truth has no real underlying nature that is grounded in reality. Instead, truth is a logical devise which does not amount to anything more than a relation between two logical forms. This is usually expressed by way of the equivalence principle, i.e. *X is true iff X.* Take for example my claim that 'grass is green'. This claim would be true on account of the deflationary theorist, if and only if the grass is green. Saying 'it is true that grass is green' would not be any different to merely saying 'grass is green'. The former assertion can be deflated to the latter without the loss of meaning since they are logically equivalent. Considering this, the deflationary theory of truth can be understood in virtue of two components. These include a metaphysical and logical component respectively. The metaphysical component asserts that truth has no substantive nature or relational property. The logical[37] component asserts that the equivalence principle is sufficient to account for the truth-value of a given predicate.

3. The T-Schema

It is conventionally assumed that both theories of truth and any other satisfactory account of truth would accept all instances of the T-schema[38]. One way to express the T-schema is as follows:

---

37 Deflationists are, however, typically committed to three theses about the phrase "is true," usually called the natural language *truth predicate*. (That label also covers the phrase's synonyms "holds" and "is so" and "is the case," along with corresponding expressions in other languages.)
First, applying the truth predicate to something is equivalent to just saying it. One version of this *equivalence principle* is embodied in Tarski's T-scheme, but there are others. Different deflationists, besides holding different views on whether the "something" in question should be taken to be a sentence or a proposition, give different accounts of what the "equivalence" here amounts to.
Second, the equivalence principle is a sufficient account of the meaning of the truth predicate. There is nothing more to understanding the truth predicate than recognizing the equivalence principle, and that by itself ultimately suffices to account for our usage of the predicate and its utility. Different deflationists give different accounts of what the "recognition" here amounts to.
Third, an account of the meaning of "true" is a sufficient account of the nature of truth. There is nothing to be said about what it is for something to be true once one has said what it means to call something true. Commitment to this last thesis is implicit in the practice of the typical deflationist, who begins by promising an account of the nature of truth (often quoting Pilate's question), but in the end offers only an account of the meaning of "true." Explicit enunciation of the principle is less common. (Burgess and Burgess, 2011, p. 33-34)

$$T \langle \alpha \rangle \leftrightarrow \alpha$$

It is true that α if and only if α.

The biconditional plays a crucial role in the T-schema. The biconditional expresses a specific kind of logical connective. For any variables A and B, $A \leftrightarrow B$ is true whenever A and B have the same truth-value. An alternative way to think about the biconditional is by acknowledging the conjunction of two conditionals such as $A \leftrightarrow B$ that can equally be defined as $(A \rightarrow B) \wedge (B \rightarrow A)$. In the case of a valid biconditional we have what is called 'equivalence'. The variables A and B would qualify as being logically equivalent when they both share the same truth-value under every interpretation. The T-schema manifests a logical equivalence (of form and meaning) between the variables that are posited on both sides of the biconditional arrow. The loss of equivalence would sever the reciprocal association between the variables at the most primitive level. Consequently, any basic account which attempts to offer an adequate theory or definition of truth would suffer from a logical in-equivalence. This means that the theory would stand in conceptual isolation while failing to draw a basic logical connection between any two posited variables.

---

38 It is widely assumed that any satisfactory account of truth has to accept all (or nearly all) instances of the following truth schema (T-schema short): it is true that *p* if and only if *p'* or, in another formulation, the proposition that *p* is true if and only if p. One may even argue that the schema crucial to our common notion of truth that to have the correct grasp of the later means to endorse the schema and its various instances as primitively compelling, as holding in virtue of the concepts involved, and thus knowable a priori. Hence any argument showing the incompatibility of a given account of truth with the schema would be damaging for the account in question. (Szubka, 2003, p. 93)

The T-schema is adopted by both the correspondence[39] and deflationary[40] theories of truth. However, there is a crucial difference as to how advocates of each of these truth theories construe the T-schema. For the correspondence theorist the T-schema is construed in realist terms. In this sense whatever is posited by the variable on the left-hand side of the biconditional bears an equivalence, namely a specific type of correspondence, with that posited by the variable on the right-hand side of the bionditional. This correspondence relation is what binds both these variables that stand in for an assertion and how the world actually is in reality respectively. Thus, the T-schema $T \langle \alpha \rangle \leftrightarrow \alpha$ on this account will be construed as: the assertion 'snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white in reality. For the deflationary theorists, on the other hand, the T-schema is construed as a mere logical connective which bears no metaphysical foundation. In this sense, to assert that 'α is true if and only if α' would be neither to say anymore nor any less than just that. It would be nothing more than a semantic equivalence. Thus, the T-schema $T \langle \alpha \rangle \leftrightarrow \alpha$ on this account will be construed as: the assertion 'it is true that snow is white' if and only if 'snow is white'. Both assertions on either side of the biconditional would bear nothing more than a logical equivalence despite the additional phrase 'it is true that' posited on the left-hand side of the biconditional.

As a result of these different ways in which the T-schema is construed, the correspondence account falls under the broader category of substantive truth theories, while the deflationary

---

39 Concerning the Tarskian idea, it is common to talk about the "semantic theory of truth". Which notion of truth underlies the T-schema? Scholars have discussing for decades on the issue whether Tarski's is a correspondence conception of truth in which, roughly, a sentence is true iff it corresponds to facts, to how things actually are in the world. In the opening notes of '*The Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages*' Tarski maintains that the idea according to which "a true sentence is one which says that the affairs is so and so, and the state of affairs indeed is so and so" expresses "the classical view of truth". (Berto, 2007, p. 17)

40 On the contrary, it is claimed that the schema has precisely the advantage of providing a guiding principle for the specification of the truth conditions without employing heavy theoretical or metaphysical commitments. (Berto, 2007, p. 17)

account falls under the category of insubstantive truth theories. Sher (2016) describes substantivism as

> . . . a general philosophical methodology advocating a substantive approach to philosophical theorizing. "Substantive" is largely understood in the ordinary sense of the word, which includes such traits as "important," "significant," "deep," "interesting," "informative," "explanatory," "rigorous," "precise," "accurate," "thorough," and "subject to demanding norms of inquiry and justification." Substantivism encompasses both the subject-matter of philosophical theorizing and the theorizing itself. (Sher, 2016, p. 818)

When substantivism, characterised in this way, is applied to the notion of truth it purports a positive methodology that allows scope for serious philosophical investigation. It does this primarily by offering meaningful content about things that are firmly entrenched in a mind-independently reality. This meaningful content has an underlying nature that is grounded in such a reality. This is essentially what saves it from being trivial and metaphysically transparent. Consequently, substantive truth theories offer significant explanatory power to various phenomena in ways that are constructive. It is precisely how theories of this category, methodologically go about making sense of things. In contrast, the insubstantive truth theories are devoid of such elements. Sher (2016) has summed these up. Nevertheless, for our purposes it is sufficient to say that insubstantive theories seem to be conceptually satisfied with subscribing to a trivial notion of truth, which is metaphysically transparent[41]. This means there is nothing beyond a logical property of any truth or falsehood. Truth and falsehood in this sense

---

41 . . . the best way of characterizing deflationism's metaphysical commitments is to say that according to deflationism, truth is a metaphysically transparent property. Metaphysically transparent properties have no underlying nature that isn't revealed in our grasp of the concept; grasping the relevant concept tells us the whole, or real essence of the property. (Lynch, 2009, p. 116)

does not have an underlying nature. Despite the obvious criticisms levelled against insubstantive truth theories, their metaphysical transparency and trivialist conception of truth (regardless of how peculiar it may appear) is still a way of making sense of things. It is still a truth theory which conforms to instances of the T-schema and provides a particular understanding of truth.

4. Applying both of these assumptions in making sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam would result in a paradox (of ineffability)

I have spent the first section of this paper drawing on how analytic philosophy typically assumes the laws of logic and substantive or insubstantive theories of truth in making sense of things. In doing so, I have established that both assumptions play a crucial role for analytic philosophy to make sense of things. I shall now demonstrate how the application of both these assumptions would fail in making sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam. I shall argue that the consequence which ensues from this failure results in what I refer to as a 'paradox of ineffability'. To achieve this, I shall begin by providing what I take to be an absolute ineffable view of God in the Islamic tradition. Subsequently, I shall demonstrate how the laws of logic and the two generic types of truth theories fail in making sense of this notion of God.

4.1 Absolute ineffable view of God in the Islamic tradition

The view of an Islamic God that I shall adopt is one that I borrow from the erudite and illustrious 12th century Islamic theologian *Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī* (d. 1111). As Watt (2014) notably points out, *al-Ghazālī* was a prime exponent of *Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī's* (d. 935)[42]

---

42 Al-Ash'ari was born at Basrah. Regarding his date of birth there is difference of opinion. Ibn Khallikan, in his discussion of the life of al-Ash'ari, mentions that he was born in 260 or 270/873 or 883 and died at Baghdad in 330/941 or some time after that. According to Shibli Nu'mani and ibn `Asakir (the author of *Tabyin Kidhb al-Muftari,* on the life and teachings of al-Ash'ari), he was born in 270/873 and died in 330/941. He was buried

theological views. From among *al-Ghazālī's* theological views regarding God, here is an excerpt that bears a significant relevance to the specific notion of God that I shall adopt:

God does not inhere in anything, and nothing inheres in Him. He is exalted above being contained by space, and too holy to be bounded by time; on the contrary, He existed before He created time and space. He now has [the attributes] by which He was [previously characterized], and is distinguished from His creatures by His attributes. There is not in His essence what is other than He, nor in what is other than He is there [anything of] His essence. He is exalted above change [of state] and movement. Originated things do not inhere [or subsist] in Him, and accidental [events] do not befall Him. Rather, He does not cease; through the qualities of His majesty He is beyond cessation, and through the attributes of His perfection He is independent of [or does not require] any further increase of perfection. (al-Ghazālī translated by Watt in Renard, 2014, p. 110)

The distinguishing feature which sits at the heart of *al-Ghazālī's* belief of God is that He is unknowable[43]. Although one may be able to detect subtle sentiments that are indicative of unknowability from the excerpt above, I find that Burrell (1987) has expressed this in a more apparent manner.

Given the fact that "God is a being necessarily existing of Himself (*al-mawjud al-wajib al-wujud bi-dhatihi*)" (*Maqsad* 47, M 342–43), it should be clear that this "peculiar divine property belongs only to God and only God knows it." Moreover "it

---

between Karkh and Bab al-Basrah (the gate of Basrah). He was a descendant of abu Musa al-Ash'ari, one, of the famous Companions of the Prophet. (M.M. Sharif, 1963, p. 222-223)

43 See Fadlou Shehadi's Ghazali's Unique Unknowable God (1964)

is inconceivable that anyone know it save Him or one who is His like, since He has no like, no other knows it." On such an account, "only God knows God" (*ibid*.). So the resources of philosophy confirm God's uniqueness or *tawhid*: the utter distinction of the One from all else: "everything the exercise of which is possible," which does in fact exist from that One "according to the best ways of order and perfection" (*Maqsad* 47, M 342). (Burrell, 1987, p. 181)

Considering both these excerpts, I shall assert that God transcends all human conceptions of time, space, categories, and our cognitive and linguistic capacities. God is therefore believed to be *absolutely* transcendent. As a result of such absolute transcendence, I shall infer that in the Islamic tradition[44], God is *absolutely* ineffable. The absolute ineffability that I have in mind is a radical type which eludes all thought and articulation of God. In this sense God would be incomprehensible and inexpressible. Let us term these as conceptual and semantic ineffability respectively. By conceptual ineffability I mean logically inconceivable and by semantic ineffability I mean linguistically inexpressible. Combining these two types of ineffability would qualify it with an absoluteness that allows us to distinguish it from weaker forms of ineffability. Weaker forms in ineffability are types that would be inclined towards making some form of concession. This would include granting an ability to either conceive or express a notion of God or both to avoid the paradoxical scenario it gives rise to[45].

---

44 It should be noted that I do not intend to speak for the whole of the Islamic tradition.

45 See Hick (2000). The most notable reply to Alston's arguments comes from John Hick. As a part of his pluralist hypothesis, Hick maintains that the Real, which shows itself in religious or mystic experiences across cultures, is ineffable and can only be grasped in categories shaped by our respective cultures and traditions. So, if a Christian mystic experiences a personal God while Buddhists experience the non-personal state of nirvana, there is no actual contradiction, since the contradictory predicates only apply to the various personae of the Real, not to the Real itself. The Real itself is beyond the categories of human thought and is, therefore, ineffable; our predicates do not apply to it. Hick, being aware of the problems this claim implies, tries to avoid the paradox of ineffability by making a distinction between formal and substantial predicates. Formal predicates tell us nothing about what the Real is like in itself, substantial predicates do. If, e.g. I say about the Real that it is a possible object of reference, then this is just a formal predicate, while saying that it is a person is a substantial predicate. (Gäb, 2017, p. 3)

Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that I do not ascribe absolute ineffability to the Islamic God given that He is devoid of divine attributes or properties. *Al-Ghazālī* has clearly affirmed the existence of God's attributes in the above excerpt. He insinuates that God's attributes are different (in-kind as opposed to in-degree) and unlimited as well as perfect. It would follow that God is absolutely ineffable on the grounds that His attributes are unfathomable whereby we are unable to conceive nor express them. More importantly, it would be incorrect to uphold the view that God is absolute ineffable exclusively on the grounds that He has no attributes that can be predicated to Him. In this case the non-existence of attributes would leave no room for them to be conceptually and semantically ineffable. Consequently, saying nothing about God would still, bizarrely, express all that there is, only because there is nothing. Thus, Kukla (2005) on this matter has expressed that such an understanding has nothing to do with ineffability.

4.2 Laws of logic

Let us first approach this notion of God from a logical perspective. This would involve adhering to the fundamental laws of logic. Adhering to the laws of logic would, to a certain degree, intellectually compel me by way of logical normativity and necessity to admit that a contradiction must always be *false,* and a tautology must always be *true*. If I attempt to resist this claim it would defy the very laws of logic. Thus, these axiomatic statements would act as conceptual methods by which analytic philosophy would attempt to make sense of an ineffable God. However, this would hardly prove to be successful. Let me explain why. Take the claim 'God is ineffable'. If God is ineffable, as the claim asserts, then He cannot be conceived of and nor spoken of. Any conception of God and articulation of this conception would render Him effable (describable). The claim, nonetheless, explicitly asserts that God is ineffable (indescribable). This claim is an articulation of a concept, an expression of a thought about an

ineffable God. It means that the very claim itself, namely 'God is ineffable' would necessarily imply that He is effable and if He is effable then He is *not* ineffable. Consequently, the claim 'God is ineffable', though it anticipates expressing that God is indescribable by way of stating He is ineffable, does so at the cost of describing God. This is a self-defeating claim which manifests an evident contradiction. The implication of a contradiction would deem the claim to be necessarily false. I shall call this the paradox of ineffability.

A paradox can be understood as an argument which appears to offer true premises on the grounds of correct reasoning that sequentially lead on to a false conclusion[46]. This is how Sainsbury (2009) understands a paradox,

> . . . an apparently unacceptable conclusion derived by apparently acceptable reasoning from apparently acceptable premises. Appearances have to deceive, since the acceptable cannot lead by acceptable steps to the unacceptable. So, generally, we have a choice: either the conclusion is not really unacceptable, or else the starting point, or the reasoning, has some non-obvious flaw. (Sainsbury, 2009, p. 1)

This understanding reflects, in some way, as to why I have chosen to express the claim 'God is ineffable' as a paradox. It is primarily due to its inherent conflicting nature. The claim attempts to communicate the indescribability of God at the cost of describing Him. Apparently, this claim reveals something which, without deeper inspection, seems to say what God-cannot-be by using a negative prefix, namely, 'in-effable'. This may appear acceptable on the condition that it has been arrived at by apparently acceptable premises. However, what it eventually

---

46 See Olin (2003)

implies is unacceptable. The semantic implication of the term 'ineffability' infers a direct inconsistency with the claim that is used to communicate it. Therefore, we are left with a claim which fails to assert what it intends, because it unavoidably does what it says cannot be done.

This conceptual dilemma has led many theologians to resort to the apophatic tradition. One of the obvious reasons as to why practitioners of the apophatic method (negative theology) have sought this alternative is to minimise violating the absolute ineffability of God. Restricting themselves to negative claims about what God-is-*not* may help circumvent anthropomorphic attributions to an ineffable God. Of course, this approach might appear to be less prone to the kinds of anthropomorphic issues that arise with positive claims; however, they are not any different when it comes to matters of absolute ineffability. Saying what God-is-not wouldn't be any different to saying what He is when it comes to matters of absolute ineffability. A negative claim would still be a propositional claim despite inferring what-is-not-the-case. Therefore, negative claims about an ineffable God would be no less different in resulting in a contradiction than positive claims. This is because they are both inferring something by way of predication.

Prior to discussing the truth-value of such a contradictory claim, it is worth focussing on the logical contradiction that stems from it. There are a few ways a contradiction can be characterised. Grim (2004) has accumulated and assorted nineteen of these characterisations into four overarching types. These include pragmatic, metaphysical, semantic, and syntactic types. I shall briefly explain each of these types and demonstrate how they construe the claim 'God is ineffable'. Thereafter, I shall select one of these types of contradiction that I shall work with.

Pragmatic: This type of contradiction can be formally expressed in the following two ways

$\neg\,(\vdash_x \alpha \land \vdash_x \neg\alpha)$ It is not the case that (Rational agent) x accepts/asserts both α and $\neg\alpha$

$\neg\,(\vdash_x \alpha \land \dashv_x \alpha)$ It is not the case that (Rational agent) x both accepts/asserts and rejects/denies α

This approach to contradictions tends to focus on assertion and denial. It represents Aristotle's characterisation of what he thought a contradiction was in a particular way[47]. In Aristotle's *On Interpretations* he provides a straightforward definition of a contradiction by stating that it is a couple of propositions that consist of an affirmation and denial. This needn't mean you always have to have two propositions to result in this type of contradiction. You can have one proposition which expresses an affirmation and denial. Much like the claim 'God is ineffable'. In this case we have an affirmation and denial of the same claim. The claim affirms the ineffability of God while denying it by implying that He is effable. The main distinction of this type of contradiction from the ones that follow is that it draws on the acts of affirmation and denial instead of other aspects such as states of affairs, falsity, and form.

Metaphysical: This type of contradiction specifically bears ontological implications. It can be formally expressed in the following way

$\forall x\,\forall F\,\neg\,(F\,(x) \land \neg F\,(x))$ The same object cannot both have and not have the same property

---

47 In Aristotle's words: It is impossible for any one to believe the same thing to be and not to be, as some think like Heraclitus says. (Met. 1005b23-5)

This approach to a contradiction is not concerned with single or a pair of statements or propositions. It rather focuses on a states of affairs. If a state of affair is contradictory it would be the kind which possess and lacks a particular kind of property at the same time. This type of contradiction seems to be a closer variant of what Aristotle proposed in his characterisation of a contradiction[48]. More specifically, it appears to relate to his concise version of the law of non-contradiction in which he stated, "A thing cannot at the same time be and not be" (Met. 996b29-30). The ontological implications of this version are more apparently communicated than alternative interpretations. It denies the ontological status of properties that both exist and do not exist. The implication of this type of contradiction can be appreciated in virtue of the claim 'God is ineffable'. In this context, the claim infers that God cannot be described by way of attributing any property to Him, while having attributed some property to Him. The ontological version of contradiction would thus imply that no 'being' can instantiate and not instantiate properties. It would thus rule out the existence of any such contradictory properties altogether.

Semantic: This type of contradiction can be formally expressed in the following ways

$\neg \, (T \, (\ulcorner \alpha \urcorner) \wedge F \, (\ulcorner \alpha \urcorner))$ The same sentence cannot both be true and false

$\neg \, (T \, (\ulcorner \alpha \urcorner) \wedge T \, (\ulcorner \neg \alpha \urcorner))$ A sentence and its negation cannot both be true

---

48 The same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect; we must presuppose, in the face of dialectical objections, any further qualifications which might be added. (Met. 1005b19-2)

$\neg \, (T \, (\ulcorner \alpha \urcorner) \wedge \neg T \, (\ulcorner \alpha \urcorner))$ The same sentence cannot be both true and untrue

This approach to a contradiction uses presupposed notions of truth and falsity (a type of truth theory) to infer the falsity of all contradictions. Although, this is a common feature of the law of non-contradiction, it is specifically expressed in this type as opposed to others. In the other types of contradictions, being false may be seen as a mere consequence. That is while they focus on more salient aspects such as the assertion and denial, states of affairs, and form. In this type, however, manifesting the falsity of a contradiction is a primary goal. Moreover, it resonates with Aristotle's view on contradiction where he asserts that "The most indisputable of all beliefs is that contradictory statements are not at the same time true" (Met. 1011b13-4).

An alternative way to apprehend a contradiction of this kind would be to identify it with a negation of a tautology[49]. The truth of a tautology is determined by its form and cannot be false. It is a formula that cannot be false in all possible interpretations of its propositional variables. Therefore, its negation would result in a contradiction. In this context, the claim 'God is ineffable' is a contradiction and therefore false. It bears an inherent contradiction which cannot possibly be true.

Syntactic: This type of contradiction can be formally expressed in the following way

$\neg \, (\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha)$ It cannot be the case that α and not α

---

49 C10 This case is called a *contradiction*; a formula of this kind is always false. We obtain such formulas by taking the negation of a tautology. (Hans Reichenbach (1947: 36))

C11 A statement form which is false for all possible truth values of its statement letters is called a contradiction. (Elliot Mendelson (1964: 18))

This approach is probably Aristotle's most common characterisation of contradictions. It specifically characterises contradictions in virtue of form. This type involves a common definition of a contradiction[50], namely, "that a contradiction is of the form 'A & ~A' or 'A and not A'" (Grim, 2004, p. 53). It focuses, more generically, on the syntactic structure of claims. If a claim, such as 'God is ineffable' expresses an affirmation and denial of a thing, then its structure cannot be a valid one with respect to the law of non-contradiction. The syntactic structure of the claim 'God is ineffable' is one that has the following from: $F(\alpha) \wedge \neg F(\alpha)$. In virtue of our claim, we could read this as 'God has the property of ineffability and does not have the property of ineffability'. As a result of denying the law of non-contradiction this claim would be deemed invalid.

Given that the syntactic type of contradiction specifically characterises contradictions in virtue of form, it is the type that I shall adopt. The reason for this is twofold. The first is that it closely resembles the distinction that I drew earlier on between logic and truth. The distinction was primarily focussed on how logic is more concerned with form than truth. The second is that this type is a common way in which contradictions are understood. This would, on the most part, allow it to be inclusive of all the other types of contradictions.

---

50 C7 Contradiction: Wff∗ of the form 'A & ~A'; statement of the form 'A and not A'. (Susan Haack (1978: 244))

C8 . . . two formulae are *explicitly contradictory* if and only if one is of the form q and the other of the form _~q_, that is, if one is the negation of the other. (Graeme Forbes (1994: 102))

C9 A contradiction consists of a pair of sentences, one of which is the negation of the other. (Kalish, Montague, and Mar (1980: 18))

Each type of contradiction construes the claim 'God is ineffable' differently. Despite this, it is slightly difficult to consider each of these implications in complete isolation. Considering anyone of these implications would evidently assume others. Some may prove to be more intuitively connected to one another as opposed to others. Nonetheless, one thing seems apparent in virtue of these four types of contradictions. That is the claim 'God is ineffable' suffers from different types of implications due to the variation of how a contradiction can be understood. More importantly, these implications are considered highly problematic and thus, according to classical logic, are to be avoided at all costs. They are to be avoided for a few reasons. Priest (2004) has summed these up into five objections that are commonly raised against contradictions. They, for the most part, serve to be reasons for why we ought to avoid them. These are as follows:

1. Contradictions entail everything.
2. Contradictions can't be true.
3. Contradictions can't be believed rationally.
4. If contradictions were acceptable, people could never be rationally criticized.
5. If contradictions were acceptable, no one could deny anything.

(Priest, 2004, p. 23)

If contradictions occur, then by the standards of classical logic, they will ensue a negation of rationality. In such cases, we would be left to deal with antithetical matters of rationality such as inconsistencies, or as Davidson puts it, "a mental process or state—a rational process or state—gone wrong" (Davidson, 2004, p. 169). Thus, a-rationality or irrationality would prevent us from being able to make sense of the things in ways that are cognitively satisfying. Although

each of these objections has the potential to be addressed in virtue of paraconsistent logics[51], my concern is with classical logic. According to classical logic these objections hold against contradictions. It follows from this that the claim 'God is ineffable', which is a contradictory claim, would encounter the same objections. It would do so on the grounds of defying the law of non-contradiction. This would imply:

1′. 'God is ineffable' entails everything.

2′. 'God is ineffable' can't be true.

3′. 'God is ineffable' can't be believed rationally.

4′. If 'God is ineffable' were acceptable, people could never be rationally criticized.

5′. If 'God is ineffable' were acceptable, no one could deny anything.

I have exchanged the term 'contradictions' with the claim 'God is ineffable'. This is because the claim 'God is ineffable' *is* a contradictory one that allows it to stand in for the term 'contradiction'. In this context, they both share the same meaning. Accordingly, the consequences that ensue from the term 'contradictions' would equally ensue from the claim 'God is ineffable'. To avoid such consequences, we'd have to deny contradictory claims such as 'God is ineffable'. This is what appears to be the essential role of the law of non-contradiction. It seeks to bar contradictions. However, contradictions come in different forms as I have illustrated. For each form of contradiction there would have to be a corresponding type of barring mechanism. In terms of the type of barring mechanism for the syntactic form of contradiction we would say that contradictions cannot be *sensibly* asserted. This would mean that the claim 'God is ineffable' fails to make sense in a way which is cognitively satisfying. It

---

51 See Priest (2004) What's So Bad About Contradictions?

evidently puts the ineffability claim at odds with the laws of logic. Both of which, in this case, would prove to be mutually exclusive. Any attempt to make sense of the absolute ineffability of God would result in an obvious case of irrationality. Moreover, the issue concerning a contradiction, by way of its logical form, is a "problem of self-refutation that Alston highlighted has been noticed by other philosophers and, for example, is referred to by Leszek Kołakowski as a 'self-reference antinomy' (Metaphysical Horror 44) and by David E. Cooper as a 'paradox of ineffability' ('Ineffability and Religious Experience' 193)" (Hunter, 2015, p. 490).

4.3 Substantive truth

Let us now turn to the truth-value of contradictory claims. Classical logic tells us that all contradictions are false. This would mean that the claim 'God is ineffable' is also false. The truth-value assigned to this contradiction, namely falseness, would either be substantive or insubstantive. If this contradictory claim is false in virtue of a substantive theory such as a correspondence theory of truth, then it would mean that there is an unsuccessful correspondence relation between the claim 'God is ineffable' and the way in which reality is perceived in virtue of that claim. Given that it is determinable, namely, whether there is, or is not, a correspondence relation between the claim 'God is ineffable' and reality implies that the truth-value is substantive. This means that if we can determine that there is a correspondence relation between the claim and reality, then its truth-value, being true, would be a substantive truth-value. Alternatively, if we can determine that that there is no correspondence relation between the claim and reality, then its truth-value, being false, would equally be a substantive truth-value.

If the truth-value of the claim 'God is ineffable' can be determined in a substantive way, then it would imply that God is *not* ineffable. This can be understood considering the T-schema. The T-schema would manifest a logical equivalence, in this case, between the claim and reality. It would grant the ability to be able to determine whether there is, or is not, a correspondence equivalence between the claim 'God is ineffable' and reality. Regardless of the truth-value which ensues from this, it implies, at the very least, that it is logically conceivable/possible in determining a substantive truth-value about the claim 'God is ineffable'. This would mean that the substantive truth-value is one which bears *meaningful* content about an absolute ineffable God. This meaningful content would have an underlying nature that is firmly entrenched in a mind-independent reality. Moreover, we would have epistemic access to this mind-independent reality. As a result of which we would have the cognitive ability to make sense of the underlying nature of God's ineffability. This would refute the notion of God being conceptually ineffable.

4.4 Insubstantive truth

If the truth-value assigned to the contradictory claim 'God is ineffable' is false in virtue of an insubstantive theory of truth, such as a type of deflationary theory, then the outcome would be different. In this case the falseness of the claim would not posit any genuine property. It would not have any underlying nature that is grounded in reality. Instead, it would be a mere devise which expresses a logical function. As a result of this, the claim would be metaphysically transparent and trivial. This is not because its truth-value is false, but rather it is due to the insubstantive nature of this truth theory. For argument's sake, even if the truth-value was true, the metaphysical component of this truth theory would divest it of a substantive nature. It would not be anything more than an expression of a logical component which merely asserts the equivalence principle. The claim 'God is ineffable' would be deflated in a way which confines it to expressing nothing more than a semantic equivalence of itself.

This can be appreciated considering the T-schema. Deflationists seemingly appear to be more closely associated to the T-schema than opposing theories[52]. One of the key reasons for this is that deflationists, despite their differences on many matters, subscribe to the T-schema at face value. They don't find the need to provide underlying metaphysical interpretations to the T-schema in being able to understand it any more than what it is apparently expressing. Most would agree that a theory of truth needn't be any more informative than the equivalence that entails from the T-schema[53]. Considering this, the contradictory claim would be considered false by way of the T-schema in the following manner: 'It is false that God is ineffable' *iff* God is not ineffable. Both assertions on either side of the biconditional express a negative logical equivalence. The additional phrase situated on the left-hand side of the biconditional, namely, 'it is false that' is mirrored by an equal negation situated on the right-hand side of the biconditional, namely 'not'.

Like the correspondence theories, the deflationary account of falseness (or even truth) allows for a logical conceivability/possibility in determining an insubstantive truth-value. The way in which it is determinable for the deflationists, as opposed to the correspondence theorist, is grounded in making a logical equivalence. Consequently, the truth-value of the contradictory claim 'God is ineffable' would also be determinable in virtue of making a logical equivalence. The fact that it is determinable means it grants a form of epistemic access in coming to know something about an absolute ineffable God. Due to the metaphysical transparency and triviality of the deflationary account, it may not provide the same sort of knowing as the substantive

---

52 See footnote 27.

53 According to deflationists, "the traditional attempt to discern the *essence* of truth – to analyze that special quality which all truths supposedly have in common – is just a pseudo-problem". (Horwich, 1990: 6) There is no substantive common denominator of all truths, and therefore there is no substantive theory of truth. The task of a theory of truth is to generate a list of all instances of the Equivalence schema, and regardless of how this list is generated, the theory of truth is still a collection of trivialities. (Sher, 2006, p. 159)

theories do[54]. It may, in this regard, offer an impoverished type of cognitive satisfaction that is exclusively confined to logical equivalence. Nonetheless, the fact that it provides a basic logical equivalence in being able to determine what is the case from what is not, negates the absolute ineffability of the God in question.

Moreover, the metaphysical transparency and triviality of the deflationist account would restrict the claim 'God is ineffable' to a nonrepresentational meaning. Metaphysical transparency would deny both the subject term 'God' and its predicate 'is ineffable' of any ontological significance. Both components would bear no grounding in reality. Triviality would deprive both components, namely, 'God' and 'is ineffable' from anything beyond a logical function. The most notable consequence of both concepts would be the deprivation of meaning. The implications of metaphysical transparency and triviality would bring to question the very existence of any such God under the purview analytic ontology. The name 'God' to which absolute ineffability is predicated would bear no referent. Resultantly, the name 'God' would be meaningless[55]. God would no longer be susceptible to any criterion by which a truth-value can be determined. In this case the proper name 'God' which is supposed to designate a particular would be reduced to a logically proper name that is representative of egocentric or

---

54 Sher (2016) notes that triviality advocates a shallow theory of truth.

55 There is nonetheless an important point to be made here which demonstrates that despite our conceptual inabilities failing to conceive of God this does not render Islamic Holy Scripture (most notably the Qur'an and Hadith) as vacuous or meaningless in any way. Here is how Burrell sums al-Ghazali's view up regarding this matter: "He insists that the names of God, licensed by the Qur'an or at least not forbidden therein, signify a reality in God, but the relevant philosophical theorems, together with the experience of 'the knowers,' warn us that we cannot comprehend how (*la bi'l-kaifa*) those features qualify divinity. So our use of these names cannot tell us anything about God (*Maqsad* 192-6). But they can function as lures for us, inviting us to become ever more merciful, compassionate, and just, thus calling us to a perfection which admits of countless degrees and unending progress. If the road of identification is closed, the journey of ever-increasing assimilation is not only open but demanded of whomever desires to come to know God. For the closer one comes, the more one experiences the difference (as 'the knowers' testify), and we can invoke God's names the more surely, the more acutely we realize that our conception of the attribute in question cannot be a sure guide to its reality in God (*Maqsad* 192-6)" (Burrell 1987, 182).

indexical words. In this context, 'God' is unknowable; His name would be a vacuous term without any meaning.

For Alston (1956), however, God cannot be unknowable. The proper name 'God' is supposed to designate a particular thought by which we should be able to justify the usage of the name 'God'. This justification is achieved by being able to identify Him. The identification of God plays an integral part in determining what God is from what He's not. Failure to identify God would result in not having any reasons to name Him 'God'. According to Alston, it is possible to identify God by way of ascribing certain attributes or properties to Him. This would grant some degree of recognition of God as well establishing what He is not. Alston appears to be drawing on Frege's famous maxim here, 'sense determines reference'. He does so by implying that the various attributes that we ascribe to God in being able to identify Him are representative of the sense of God. The sense of a proper name, such as 'God', ought to be one that is grasped by those who are sufficiently acquainted with language. Likewise, by those who recognise the entirety of the designators of which the proper name is a part. This would then determine the reference of God and the correct usage of the proper name. It is possible to have an expression that has a sense but no referent. However, having no sense would impede the very thought of identifying the subject in question.

God, therefore, is identifiable according to Alston. If God can be identified, then He cannot be ineffable. This is because the claim 'God is ineffable' would constitute the following two conflicting ideas:

1. The subject term 'God' is taken to mean 'identifiable' and 'knowable' followed by

2. The predication 'is ineffable' which is taken to mean 'indescribable'

The contradiction is apparent. According to (2) the predication 'is ineffable' would make it impossible to predicate anything of God. If we are unable to predicate anything of God, it would mean that we would be unable to identify Him. Since the ability to identify God is by way of ascribing properties to Him. This would mean that (1) the subject term 'God' cannot have a sense which determines His reference. Thus, Aslton's argument against ineffability appears to be grounded in his assertion that God is *not* unknowable. That is, He is identifiable by way of ascribing various attributes to Him and thus cannot be ineffable. This way Alston avoids being embroiled in a contradictory position (the paradox of ineffability), which is false.

However, Alston's position is not amenable with what I have drawn on so far. Unlike Aslton's view, I have asserted that God *is* unidentifiable and unknowable on two specific accounts. The first is due to the Islamic notion of God that I have selected. The second is due to metaphysical transparency and triviality which stems from the deflationary account of truth. I have provided some explanation on both points. If God is unidentifiable and unknowable, it would mean:

1. The subject term 'God' is taken to mean 'unidentifiable' and 'unknowable' followed by

2. The predication 'is ineffable' which is taken to mean 'indescribable'

From this perspective, the sentence 'God is ineffable' wouldn't appear to result in a contradiction, as it would have, if God was taken to be identifiable and knowable. Both subject term and predicate in this case would be implying the same thing. The predicate term 'God' would imply that He is unidentifiable and unknowable while the predicate 'is ineffable' would imply that He is indescribable. Despite the differences in meaning between the terms (a) 'unidentifiable', (b) 'unknowable' and (c) 'indescribable' they all, loosely, seem to infer the ineffability of God. One way to appreciate this is by taking each of the terms to represent an

equivalence of form and meaning with the subject term 'God' and its predicate 'is ineffable'

such as:

God	is	Ineffable
a) The unidentifiable	is	unidentifiable
b) The unknowable	is	unknowable
c) The indescribable	is	indescribable

Each of the claims and the descriptive words which constitute them represent an equivalence of form and meaning with the sentence 'God is ineffable'. Although, the equivalence of the form is more evident than the meaning, they can still be considered to infer some aspect of ineffability as opposed to none. The logical equivalence manifested by each of the claims proves to be consistent with the T-schema $T \langle \alpha \rangle \leftrightarrow \alpha$. We can appreciate this by replacing each of the variables (α) in the T-schema with the given descriptions, such as:

$T \langle \alpha \rangle$	$\leftrightarrow$	α
a) It is true that 'the unidentifiable' is the unidentifiable	iff	It is unidentifiable
b) It is true that 'the unknowable' is the unknowable	iff	It is unknowable
c) It is true that 'the indescribable' is the indescribable	iff	It is indescribable

It becomes clear that there is logical equivalence of form and meaning between the descriptions that are posited on both sides of the biconditional arrow. What is true of the left-hand side of the biconditional would equally have to be true of the right-hand side of the biconditional. This would imply that in each of the cases, the equivalence in form and meaning would result in a tautology. As we have previously noted, a tautology is always true and cannot be false. It therefore follows from this that the claim 'God is ineffable' is a tautology and therefore

necessarily true. This radical shift from a contradiction to a tautology alters the claim 'God is ineffable' from being necessarily false to being necessarily true.

However, as appealing as this may sound, it fails to make any real difference to the paradox of ineffability. This is because, even after shifting from the falsity of a contradiction to the truth of a tautology, we would still have to account for the truth-value in question. Although the claim 'God is ineffable' now becomes consistent with the T-schema, we would still be burdened with the arduous task of determining how we should construe the T-schema to make sense of the truth which is being inferred. In the case of a tautology, we would have to account for its truth just as we have been attempting to account for the falsity of a contradiction. Therefore, the dilemma stubbornly remains. If anything, we have strayed from one paradoxical scenario to another with respect to the matter of absolute ineffability.

5. Therefore, making sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam in virtue of analytic philosophy would result in a paradox (of ineffability)

In the first section of this paper, I have demonstrated that analytic philosophy typically assumes the laws of logic and substantive or insubstantive theories of truth in making sense of things. Both methodological approaches are fundamental for analytic philosophy in being able to make sense of things in a particular way. The variation between the kinds of sense-making depends on the two broader types of truth theories, namely substantive and insubstantive theories of truth. To be able to appreciate the generic differences that sets both contrasting notions of truth apart, Sher (2016) has provided a succinct overview as follows,

> Substantivists (advocates of a substantive theory of truth) differ from deflationists on
> multiple points: Where deflationists say that "truth is entirely captured by

the…triviality…that each proposition specifies its own condition for being true", substantivists say that it is far from being fully captured by this triviality; where deflationists say that "the truth predicate exists solely for the sake of a certain logical need" (Horwich: 2), substantivists say that it exists for other needs as well; where deflationists say that truth is not a deep notion, substantivists say it is; and where deflationists say that a theory of truth cannot be, or need not be, genuinely explanatory, substantivists say it can and should be. Substantivists accept the view that truth is (initially) mysterious, but believe its mysteries can be solved rationally. (Sher, 2016, p. 132)

As a result of these differences, we end up with distinct ways of being able to make sense of things. Despite the stark differences that set both approaches apart from one another, they both lay claim to making sense of things. Both notions of truth would assume that they are, by way of their distinct methods, making sense of things in a cognitively satisfying way. The laws of classical logic, on the other hand, are fixated axioms that are used to determine deductively valid forms of inference. The three laws of classical logic are considered as axiomatic principles that are necessary for being rational. Conforming to these laws of logic would therefore be essential for being able to make sense of things[56].

In the second section of this paper, I established that the application of both assumptions would fail to make sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam. I first provided an explanation of what I take to be an absolute ineffable God the Islamic tradition. Thereafter, I demonstrated that the

---

[56] The logicians' laws of logic merely put in writing laws of "natural good sense" (ibid.). Systems of logic designed by logicians (*logique artificielle*) are like systems of arithmetic: both are aids to human reasoning because they attempt to make explicit natural relations that anyone who must count or draw inferences will use (1962, 6.6:482 and 483–4). (Losonsky, 2006, p. 61)

laws of logic and both substantive and insubstantive theories of truth failed in different ways to account for an absolute ineffable Islamic God. The failure to make sense in a cognitively satisfying way would result in a contradictory notion. I alluded to this contradiction as the paradox of ineffability. Therefore, making sense of an absolute ineffable Islamic God with the typical methodological approaches of analytic philosophy would not prove to be conceptually viable. This can be appreciated from the two perspectives that I have drawn on throughout this paper, namely the laws of logic and the two broad categories of truth. Any attempt to make sense of an absolute ineffable Islamic God would primarily result in the violation of the classical laws of logic ensuing in a contradiction. Moreover, the ways in which we may attempt to make sense and account for the falseness of this contradiction, either by substantive or insubstantive theories of truth, would prove to be inconsistent with the absolute ineffability and God Himself in different ways. Making sense and accounting for the truth of a tautology would present us with the same issues.

The methodological components in virtue of which analytic philosophy philosophizes would therefore prove to be vacuous in making sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam. If one remains highly committed to upholding both the methodological components and the absolute ineffability of God together, then they shall be confronted with the paradox of ineffability. If one, however, is willing to compromise on either of the two, then the results shall be in accordance with the kind of compromise they are willing to make. More than often, analytic philosophers of religion are highly committed to the methodological components of analytic philosophy. This can be appreciated on the grounds that analytic philosophers of religion, on most issues, seek and manage to make sense of theological matters in cognitively satisfying ways. This is probably the most significant way in which analytic philosophy of religion has progressed ever since its revival in the latter part of the twentieth century. However, such

philosophical progression would be at the cost of God's absolute ineffability. This, from an Islamic perspective, is too much of a price to pay. Entertaining the thought of relinquishing analytic philosophy, at the same time, also seems discomforting. We therefore have a dilemma that requires serious attention. To resolve this dilemma, I believe we need two alternative methodological components that would replace the ones that I have drawn on throughout this paper. These alternative methodological components ought to be ones that have the theoretical potency to overcome the paradox of ineffability. The success of these components would have wide ranging implications that are not confined to merely dissolving the paradox of ineffability. They shall, for instance, allow analytic philosophy to operate with a broader methodological scope in accounting for other contradictory matters within theology without deeming them irrational or nonsensical.

References

al-Ghazālī, A. (2014). Ghazālī's Ashʿarī Creed Translated by W. Montgomery Watt. In: J. Renard, ed., *Islamic Theological Themes A Primary Source Reader*. University of California Press: California, pp.109-113.

Alston, W. (1956). Ineffability. *The Philosophical Review*, 65(4), p.506.

Alston, W. (2001). A Realist Conception of Truth. In: M. Lynch, ed., *The Nature of Truth Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*. Massachusetts: The MIT Press, pp.41-66.

Aristotle, and Ross, W. D. (1981). *Aristotle's Metaphysics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Aristotle. and Sachs, J. (1999). *Aristotle's metaphysics*. Santa Fe, N.M.: Green Lion Press.

Audi, R. (2004). Theoretical Rationality Its Sources, Structure, and Scope. In: A. Mele and P. Rawling, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Rationality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Audi, R. (2011). *Rationality and religious commitment*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Beall, J. (2004). Introduction: At the Intersection of Truth and Falsity. In: G. Priest, J. Beall and B. Armour-Garb, ed., *The Law of Non-Contradiction New Philosophical Essays*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp.1-19.

Beaney, M. (1996). *Frege Making Sense*. London: Duckworth.

Beaney, M. (2012). Logic and Metaphysics in Early Analytic Philosophy. In: L. Haaparanta and H. Koskinen, ed., *Categories of Being Essays on Metaphysics and Logic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.257-292.

Beaney, M. (2015). What is Analytic Philosophy?. In: M. Beaney, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of The History of Analytic Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.3-29.

Bennett-Hunter, G. (2015). *Ineffability and religious experience*. London: Routledge.

Berto, F. (2007). *How to sell a contradiction The Logic and Metaphysics of Inconsistency*. London: College Publications.

Burgess, A. and Burgess, J. (2011). *Truth*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Burrell, D. (1987). The Unknowability of God in Al-Ghazali. *Rel. Stud.*, 23(02), p.171.

Davidson, D. (2004). *Problems of rationality*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Engel, P. (2002). *Truth*. Chesham: Acumen Publishing Limited.

Feldman, F. (1970). Leibniz and "Leibniz' Law." *The Philosophical Review*, 79(4), pp.510-522.

Fisher, J. (2008). *On the philosophy of logic*. Australia: Thomson/Wadsworth.

Fogelin, R. (2003). *Walking the tightrope of reason*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gäb, S. (2017). The paradox of ineffability. *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 78(3), pp.289-300.

Griffel, F. (2009). *Al-Ghazālī's philosophical theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grim, P. (2004). What is a Contradiction?. In: G. Priest, J. Beall and B. Armour-Garb, ed., *The Law of Non-Contradiction New Philosophical Essays*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp.49-72.

Haack, S. (1993). *Philosophy of logics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hanna, R. (2006). *Rationality and logic*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT.

Hick, J. (2000). Ineffability. *Religious Studies*, 36(1), pp.35-46.

Kiesewetter, B. (2017). *The normativity of rationality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kripke, S. (2001). *Naming and Necessity*. Massachusetts: Havard University Press.

Kukla, A. (2010). *Ineffability and philosophy*. London: Routledge.

Lewis, D. (1998). *Papers in Philosophical Logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Losonsky, M. (2006). *Linguistic turns in modern philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lynch, M. (2009). *Truth as One and Many*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Moore, A. (2012). *The evolution of modern metaphysics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Moore, A. W. (2017). Sense-making From a Human Point of View. In: G. D'oro and S. Overgaard, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Philosophical Methodology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.44-55.

Newton-Smith, W. (1985). *Logic An Introductory Course*. London: Routledge.

Olin, D. (2003). *Paradox*. Chesham: Acumen Publishing Limited.

Priest, G. (2004). What's So Bad About Contradictions?. In: G. Priest, J. Beall and B. Armour-Garb, ed., *The Law of Non-Contradiction New Philosophical Essays*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp.23-38.

Priest, G. (2006). *Doubt truth to be a liar*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Rea, M. (2011). Introduction. In: M. Rea and O. Crisp, ed., *Analytic Theology New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.1-30.

Renard, J. ed., (2014). *Islamic Theological Themes a primary source reader*. Oakland: University of California Press, pp.109-116.

Rescher, N. (2017). Philosophy as Rational Systematization. In: G. D'oro and S. Overgaard, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Philosophical Methodology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.32-43.

Rumfitt, I. (2017). *The Boundary Stones of Thought*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Russell, B. (2008). *The Problems of Philosophy*. Rockville: Arc Manor.

Sainsbury, R. (2009). *Paradoxes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sharif, M. M. (ed.) (1963). *A History of Muslim Philosophy: With Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and the Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands*. Royal Book Co.

Sher, G. (2006). Truth, the Liar, and Tarski's Semantics. In: D. Jacquette, ed., *A Companion to Philosophical Logic*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, pp.145-163.

Sher, G. (2016). Substantivism about truth. *Philosophy Compass*, 11(12), pp.818-828.

Sher, G. (2016). *Epistemic Friction An Essay on Knowledge, Truth, and Logic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Šiḥāda, F. (1964). *Ghazali's unique and unknowable God*. Leiden: Brill.

Smith, N. (2012). *Logic the Laws of Truth*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Soames, S. (2014). *The Analytic Tradition in Philosophy Vol 1 The Founding Giants*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Szubka, T. (2003). The T-Schema and the Epistemic Conception of Truth. *Teorema: Revista Internacional de Filosofía*, 22(3), pp.93-99.

Trakakis, N. (2013). Truth, or the futures of philosophy of religion. *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 74(5), pp.366-390.

PAPER 2

The logical inconsistency in making sense of an ineffable God of Islam

1. Introduction

Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) was an erudite and illustrious 12th century Islamic theologian who had postulated an interesting notion of God. *Al-Ghazālī* posited that God is unrelatably unique and unknowable[57]. This involved thinking of God in a manner that is essentially incomparable to any human categories[58]. I refer to this notion of God as an absolute ineffable God. I shall go on to demonstrate that this absolute ineffable notion of God is a contradictory notion. Nonetheless, contrary to what it seems, *al-Ghazālī* does not anticipate severing the relationship between man and his creator in having postulated this notion of God. As a matter of fact, "Al-Ghazālī was convinced that God can be conceived and perceived by humans, albeit only after overcoming much difficulty by education or preparation such as "polishing of the heart"" (Griffel, 2009, p. 263). Being able to acquire an appreciation of God (in the purest sense) thus had to be, for al-*Ghazālī*, a profoundly mystical endeavour. This meant that God could not, in His truest sense, be apprehended by exclusively espousing *intelligible* mediums. That is because such mediums would prove indicative of anthropomorphism. Accordingly, God's absolute transcendence had to be established by redeeming it from the inevitable tainting of an underlying philosophy – a metaphysics and logic as I shall go on to demonstrate. These

---

57 See Fadlou Shehadi, Ghazal's Unique Unknowable God (Leiden: Brill, 1964).

58 God is not a body shaped nor a substance delimited and determinate. He does not resemble bodies either in being determinate or in being susceptible of division. He is not a substance, and substances do not inhere in Him; and He is not an accident, and accidents do not inhere in Him. He does not resemble any existing thing, and no existing thing resembles Him. Nothing is like Him, and He is not like anything. Measure does not limit Him, and boundaries do not contain Him. (al-Ghazālī translated by Watt in Renard, 2014, p. 109-110)

are the kinds of metaphysics and logic that are conventionally espoused in shaping our conceptions to (philosophically) adjudicate between believable and unbelievable matters.

Yet, pre and post *al-Ghazālī* – not to mention during his own epoch, there has always been an overwhelmingly strong sense of compulsion in intensively engaging with philosophical theology, philosophy of religion, and more recently, analytic theology. Perhaps it has been a sort of *intellectual* coercion in some respects that has driven many philosophers and theologians alike to make sense of doctrinal matters in a logical and meaningful way. Such pressures may have equally motivated a thorough engagement in philosophical and theological matters that advanced an apophatic understanding of God. Striving to achieve such logical consistency, sense and meaning – regardless of adopting a cataphatic or apophatic approach – has predominantly involved engaging in a philosophical inquisition. The kind, which loosely put, philosophises (in virtue of various methods) about doctrinal matters with the overarching aim to substantiate them in a logically consistent and meaningful way. Ironically however, philosophising about an absolute transcendent God would be at the cost of subjugating Him to the very categories in virtue of which we seek to substantiate and obtain meaning from. This would, in the post-modern context at least, be committing the sin of onto-theology[59]. An effective way to appreciate this is to consider a conceptual device, which, particularly for most theologians throughout history, has proved to be an indispensable tool in philosophising about matters of the divine. By which I mean, logic.

---

59 Merold Westphal notes that, '[i]n postmodern contexts, onto-theology is one of the seven deadly sins' ('Overcoming Onto-Theology' (1999), 13). As I understand it, onto-theology involves primarily two tendencies. First, it treats God primarily as an explanatory posit, so that (as Westphal puts it), 'God's *raison d'être* has become to make it possible for human reason to give ultimate explanations'. Second, it involves theorizing about God in a way that presupposes that reason is a reliable tool for arriving at *clear* knowledge of God, so that reasoning about God can ultimately remove divine mystery. To put it in other terms, the view of the onto-theologian is that we can (and sometimes do) believe *exactly the truths about God*, undistorted by our own human circumstances, that God himself believes. (Rea, 2009, p. 9)

Logic's assimilation within Islamic theology has developed[60] to occupy an integral role, ever since its initial introduction by al-*Ghazālī* himself[61]. However, the espousal of Greek logic (by which I mean Aristotelian logic) and its integration with Islamic theology cannot seemingly go without accepting its metaphysical assumptions. These metaphysical assumptions are foundational to a defining feature of Aristotelian logic, namely the laws of logic. This means that while Aristotelian logic has been employed for theological ends within the Islamic tradition, the defining features of this very logic – the laws of logic – presupposes a metaphysics. This has at least two broad consequences. The first is that the Aristotelian logic embraced by Islamic theologians would hardly prove to be metaphysically neutral. Aristotelian logic, in this case, would not be able to offer conclusions that are free from ontological presuppositions since it would advocate a substantive position on how the world is/ought to be. The second is that these metaphysical assumptions that are embedded in Aristotelian logic will naturally (and perhaps implicitly) be incorporated into the explication of certain theological matters. This means to say that the espousal of Aristotelian logic by Islamic theologians has brought with it implicit metaphysical imports, which have inevitably infiltrated Islamic theology. As to whether these metaphysical assumptions are in conformity with the Islamic tradition is something I hope to argue against in the course of this paper.

---

60 The process of adopting Greek logic continued apace after Ghazālī. The list of prominent Ashʿarī and Māturīdī theologians in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries who also wrote works on logic is remarkable: Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), Sayf al-Dīn alĀmidī (d. 631/1233), Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī (*fl.* 674/1275), Shams al-Dīn al-Samarqandī (d. 702/1303), Ṣadr al-Sharīʿa al-Maḥbūbī (d. 747/1346), Shams al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī (d. 749/1348), ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355), Saʿd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 791/1390), and al- Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413). Amongst the Shīʿīs, Ibn Abī l-Ḥadīd (d. 655/1258), Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), and Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (d. 726/1325) wrote works on both theology and logic. (El-Rouayheb, 2016, p. 414)

61 The first major theologian (*mutakallim*) to call for the adoption of Greek logic in theology was al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), but his advocacy was clearly part of a larger current of cross-fertilization between *kalām* and Avicennan philosophy that was occurring in his time. Ghazālī wrote a number of expositions of logic: *al-Qistās al-mustaqīm, Miḥakk al-naẓar, Miʿyār al-ʿilm*, and the introductory paper of his summa of jurisprudence *al-Mustaṣfā*. (El-Rouayheb, 2016, p. 411-412)

It is evident that espousing Aristotelian logic so that certain theological matters can enjoy a consistent logic demonstration, would mean conforming to the laws of logic. Specifically, the law of non-contradiction. Among the Islamic theologians, *Al-Ghazālī's* adherence to the law of non-contradiction is unequivocal. We can find this in his famous refutation, *the incoherence of the philosophers*. Although, the theological implications of *al-Ghazālī's* adherence to the law of non-contradiction are probably more apparent in matters of divine omnipotence[62]. Nevertheless, the fact that *al-Ghazālī* adheres to the law of non-contradiction on the one hand, while endorsing an absolute ineffable God that is contradictory on the other hand, appears inconsistent. *Al-Ghazālī* espouses the law of non-contradiction in matters such as those discussed in his *the incoherence of the philosophers*. Concurrently, he flouts the law of non-contradiction with respect to upholding a notion of an absolute ineffable God that is contradictory.

---

62 It has also been suggested that the acceptance of the Aristotelian scheme of genera led Ghazālī to modify earlier Ashʿarī beliefs about divine omnipotence, for such a scheme implies that there is an objective 'ontological structure' that limits God's Power (Rudolph 2005: 97). Again, the issue bears closer examination. The passage that has been adduced in support of the suggestion is from Ghazālī's *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*. Ghazālī was there addressing the objection that the Ashʿarī denial of natural causation leads to absurdities. In response, he explained that occasionalism and divine omnipotence should not be taken to mean that God may flout the law of non-contradiction, or create one person in two different places simultaneously, or create will without knowledge, or 'change genera' (*qalb al-ajnās*) such as change blackness into power or change a substance into an attribute. By 'genera' in this context Ghazālī seems to have meant the highest genera, i.e. the categories, for he countenanced change within a single category. For example, a stick might be changed into a snake, for we can conceive of an underlying matter (*mādda*) that first assumes one form (*ṣūra*) and then assumes another (Marmura 1997: 175–6). It is instructive to compare Ghazālī's discussion with a passage from *Mujarrad maqālāt al-Ashʿarī* by Ibn Fūrak (d. 406/1015) in which Ashʿarī is quoted as responding to a similar worry about occasionalism and the denial of natural causation (Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad*, 132–3). Ashʿarī too explained that this theological position does not imply that God may flout the law of non-contradiction. Nor does it imply that God may, for example, create an accident without a non-accident that possesses it. It is also difficult to see, given Ashʿarī's definitions of the three basic categories of created being—accident, atom, and body—how he could have countenanced that for example an accident may change into an atom or body, or vice versa (see *jism, jawhar*, and *ʿaraḍ* in the index to Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad*, 364, 365, 371). Though Ashʿarī stated that God could create cold and wet in fire, he immediately added that in such a case we would cease to call it 'fire' if language users had determined that the word 'fire' only be used of what is hot and bright. Ashʿarī also believed that for example knowledge (*ʿilm*) presupposes life (*ḥayāt*) and that it would be impossible to have the former without the latter (Ibn Fūrak, *Mujarrad*, 205). The upshot is that both Ashʿarī and Ghazālī recognized an objective 'ontological structure' inthe world. Ghazālī's use of the Aristotelian language of genera and hylomorphism is certainly novel, but it is less clear that this amounted to a significantly different view of divine omnipotence. (El-Rouayheb, 2016, p. 415)

However, it may be contested that Aristotelian logic was not adopted wholesale by Islamic theologians. The later significant developments in Arabic logic do not merely demonstrate novel contributions in logic but an apparent departure from Aristotle's *Organon*. Later developments in Arabic logic included important transformations which shifted the focus from the constituting parts of the *Oragnon* to matters that were exclusively related to definitions and formal syllogisms. Thus, to imply that the metaphysical baggage that came with adopting Aristotelian logic had entirely permeated Islamic theological matters would be inaccurate. In response to this, one thing appears to be evident. That is, the engagement with logic in the Arab world was essentially motivated by the process of translating and commentating on the works of Aristotle. It was during this period (late ninth and early tenth century) where Abbasid scholars who were situated in Baghdad had committed themselves to the continuation of the Greek tradition of Aristotelian studies[63]. Early scholars such as *al-Fārābī* (d. 339/950) strived in remaining as true as possible to the teachings of Aristotle. Despite these efforts, there were departures beginning with *Ibn Sīnā* (d. 428/1037) who introduced his own innovations into the syllogistic system[64]. Although these departures may well be considered as the causes of what later instigated developments and novel contributions in Arabic logic, one thing remains

---

63 In its earliest period, writing on logic in Arabic was closely linked to the process of translating and commenting upon the works of Aristotle. The first important center for this activity was the ʿAbbasid capital Baghdad. There, in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, a circle of scholars emerged who saw themselves as a continuation of the Greek tradition of Aristotelian studies in late antiquity. The most important figure of this circle was undoubtedly Fārābī (d. 950), who wrote esteemed commentaries on the works of the *Organon* following the tradition of the Greek commentators. (El-Rouayheb, 2010, p. 14)

64 Within fifty years of Alfarabi's death, another logical tradition had crystallized, finding its most influential statement in the writings of Avicenna (d. 1037). Although Avicenna revered Alfarabi as a philosophical predecessor second only to Aristotle, his syllogistic system differed from Alfarabi's on two major structural points. It is in consequence relatively straightforward to assign subsequent logicians to one or other tradition. Avicenna differed from Alfarabi in his approach to the Aristotelian text, and assumed even less than Alfarabi had that it contained a straightforward exposition of a coherent system merely awaiting sympathetic interpretation to become clear. Due perhaps to the flexibility of the larger philosophical framework with which it was associated, a framework which proved adaptable to the needs of Islamic philosophical theology, Avicenna's logic came in time to be the dominant system against which later logicians set forward their own systems as alternatives or modifications. (Street, 2004, p. 523)

undisputable. That is, at no time during these departures, developments, and novel contributions in Arabic logic, was there a period where the fundamental laws of logic, upon which Aristotelian logic is founded, were disregarded. For argument's sake, even if Aristotelian logic was not adopted wholesale and there were departures which gave rise to noteworthy developments in Arabic logic, it is evident that the laws of logic were unequivocally adhered to throughout. In fact, there is hardly an instance of Arab logicians having engaged in a (*formal*) system of logic, while unequivocally having defied the laws of logic. Moreover, when we consider the fundamental metaphysical assumptions that are derivatives of Aristotelian logic, we cannot help but think of the laws of logic. The laws of logic are very much metaphysical in this sense. That is because they impose constraints with respect to how we conceive/ought to conceive and express our conceptions of reality.

With the advent of classical logic, we are continuing to observe an adherence to the laws of logic. Moreover, the system of classical logic exhibits a prominent role within analytic philosophy. Given that the laws of logic have persistently endured in actively defining classical logic and its preceding system of logic, it begs the question as to whether it proves to be consistent with Islam. Considering this, I shall investigate the consistency between Islam and classical logic, which has been the predominant driving force of analytic philosophy. The inquiry would seek to determine if classical logic is consistent (amenable) in making sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam. More specifically, this would involve determining whether the metaphysical assumptions of the law of non-contradiction prove to be consistent (amenable) to absolute ineffable God of Islam. I shall argue that it is inconsistent. I shall also consider if non-classical logic manages to avoid these issues. Although, I am principally concerned with classical logic, my argument is as applicable to earlier systems of logic as much as it is to classical logic. This is on the basis that both systems of logic, namely, preceding systems and classical logic, consider the laws of logic as defining features.

Here is my argument:

1. Classical logic is established upon certain assumptions, namely the laws of logic. These laws allow classical logic to make sense of things.

2. These assumptions, i.e., the laws of logic (most notably the law of non-contradiction), constrain our metaphysics. That is to say that the laws of logic are not metaphysically neutral.

3. This metaphysical constraint blocks one from accepting an absolute ineffable God of Islam as being logically consistent. This is because according to classical logic all contradictions are false, and an absolute ineffable God is a contradictory notion.

4. Therefore, classical logic is inconsistent (not amenable) in making sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam.

My argument, as constructed above, will represent the structure of my paper. That is, I shall use each of the premises as main headings of this paper. Each of these headings will then be divided into subsections to delineate between sub-divisional themes which constitute each of the main sections. I shall initiate with premise 1, by providing an insight into how we might think about classical logic. This will include three subsections. Subsection 1.1 will provide two demarcating features between Aristotelian logic and classical logic. This will have two primary objectives. The first will be to obtain a nuanced idea between the distinguishing and common features of Aristotelian and classical logic respectively. While the second would be to set the scene to elaborate upon the defining feature of classical logic, namely the laws of logic. I shall move on to elaborate on the laws of logic in subsection 1.2. This will be an essential feature of this paper. Subsequently, in subsection 1.3, I will touch on reasons why the laws of logic, and

more specifically the law of non-contradiction, bears an intuitive appeal in virtue of making sense of things.

Moving on to premise 2, I shall focus on how the laws of logic contribute to constraining our metaphysics. Furthermore, I will demonstrate that this implies that the laws of logic are not metaphysically neutral. This will include seven subsections. I shall initiate with a core question, namely, 'would my attempt in making sense of things, by way of adhering to the laws of logic, encroach upon my metaphysical understanding or belief about any given matter?' I shall begin by addressing this question in the first subsection, 2.1. I will evaluate the cost at which classical logic makes sense of things in virtue of the law of non-contradiction. This will include an assessment of the metaphysical cost of adopting the law of non-contradiction as a method to ascertain inferential/sequential (logical) order that is indicative of validity – the kind with which we make sense of things. Naturally, this will lead on to exploring the ontological status of contradictions, which I shall argue in favour of in subsection 2.2. In subsection 2.3, I will draw on why our conceptions of reality conform to the law of non-contradiction. In subsection 2.4, I will refer to metaphysical instances of contradictory accounts. In subsection 2.5, I shall introduce dialetheism and its two types. In subsection 2.6, I will demonstrate how both types of dialetheism infer an underlying association with metaphysical realism. In the final subsection 2.7, I will resort back to the metaphysical neutrality of logic and argue against the neutrality of classical logic.

In premise 3, I shall demonstrate how the metaphysical constraint blocks one from accepting an absolute ineffable God of Islam as being logically consistent. All the philosophical themes in the preceding sections that I will have drawn upon will contribute towards substantiating premise 3. This will include four subsections. In subsection 3.1, I will provide an overview of the notion of an Islamic God that I wish to work with, namely an absolute ineffable God. In

subsection 3.2, I shall evaluate this notion of God, initially in virtue of metaphysical logical realism. In subsection 3.3, I will subsequently evaluate this notion of God in virtue of metaphysical foundationalism. It should be noted that both metaphysical logical realism and metaphysical foundationalism act as the metaphysical underpinnings for classical logic. Moreover, much of what has been covered with regards to classical logic in the subsections of premises 1 and 2 loosely reflects features of metaphysical logical realism and metaphysical foundationalism. Thus, the introduction of these ideas and evaluating them in virtue of an absolute ineffable God is not foreign to my goal – in fact they are very pertinent. Finally, I hope to conclude this paper with premise 4; having established my claim, that classical logic is inconsistent (not amenable) in making sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam.

2. Classical logic is established upon certain assumptions, namely the laws of logic. These laws allow classical logic to make sense of things

In the opening premise of this paper, I shall draw on specific features of Aristotelian and classical logic that are distinct *and* common with respect to both logical systems. Prior to initiating this task, it would be worthwhile explicating how drawing a distinction between the specific features that are distinct and common with respect to Aristotelian and classical logic proves relevant to my argument. To appreciate the relevance, consider the following. As I touched on earlier, Aristotelian logic had been integrated in Islamic theology. The impetus which drove this integration was grounded in the assumption that logic has the potential to assist Islamic scholars in explicating matters by way of demonstrating logical consistency when it came to theology (and jurisprudence)[65]. This meant that Aristotelian logic, despite the novel

---

65 The success and rapid spread of Avicenna's philosophy and logic elicited a strong reaction from establishment theology, whose very intellectual vitality was perceived to be threatened. The clearest and most influential response to Avicenna was given about half a century after his death by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī (d. 1111). A case had been made at least as early as Alfarabi that logic could help Muslim scholars in juristic and theological reasoning. Ġazālī accepted these arguments and went so far as to preface his juridical summa, *The distillation of*

developments introduced by *Ibn Sīnā* (d. 428/1037), after having departed from *Al-Fārābī's* (d. 339/950) syllogistic system, had provided the foundation in allowing for matters of theology and jurisprudence to enjoy logical demonstration. One of the notable and underlying features of Aristotelian logic that has persistently been upheld by nearly all Islamic theologians throughout the millennia (although this is certainly not exclusive to Islamic theologians in anyway) are the laws of logic. Even with the advent of classical logic, Islamic theologians have seemingly found it *almost* impossible to engage with a *formal* system of logic while abandoning the laws of logic. Moreover, classical logic, despite its stringent adherence to the laws of logic, has proposed a radically different ontology. The difference in ontology has a direct bearing on the incompatibility between the two systems of logic.

I believe both matters are problematic in virtue of making sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam. Although I have already written on the issue concerning ontology[66], I shall introduce *how* the recent methods of ontology have created a discord between Aristotelian and classical logic. This would prove beneficial on at least two accounts. Firstly, it would provide an understanding as to how a discord motivated by a naturalistic ontology leads to an incompatibility between the two systems of logic in question. Secondly, and quite naturally, it would help appreciate the required shift from Aristotelian to classical logic. Once both, the ontology which divides the two systems of logic, and the need to embrace the more powerful

---

the principles of jurisprudence, with a short treatise on logic. Logic continued to face pious opposition after Ġazālī, but even scholars who were opposed to Greek philosophy in its various manifestations were agreed that, taken as a formal system, logic was unobjectionable.

Logic after Ġazālī was regularly studied by Muslim scholars for use in theology and jurisprudence. It also continued to be studied by Muslim scholars who were interested in the deeper formal and philosophical questions Avicenna had raised. (Street, 2004, p. 523-524)

66 Ahsan, A. (2019) Quine's Ontology and the Islamic Tradition. *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 36(2), pp.20-63.

and expressive logic of the two logics (classical logic) has been acknowledged, I shall focus on a specific feature that is common in both systems of logic. By this I mean the laws of logic. The laws of logic have persisted from Aristotelian to classical logic and are thus common to both logical systems. My primary focus in this regard will be to demonstrate that this feature, namely the laws of logic is, inconsistent (not amenable) in making sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam. Thus, regardless which one of the two logical systems is espoused with the aim of making sense of an absolute ineffable God, it would fail in doing so. Although I shall principally focus on classical logic, I hope the need for my exposition on Aristotelian logic has become apparent.

The consequence which would give rise in this respect would materialise irrespective of the theologians/philosophers who employ it – Islamic or non-Islamic. This is because whichever one of the two logical systems is espoused by any scholar; it would inexorably adhere to the laws of logic. If this claim is true, then the prime reason for the Islamic theologian in espousing logic (both logical systems can be considered here) would become redundant. Such systems of logic would hardly prove to explicate matters pertaining to theology and jurisprudence as it was primarily employed to do. In fact, any of the two systems of logic adopted by the Islamic theologian would, ironically, defy the very God, and thus the religion, whose theological tenets and jurisprudence they are attempting to logically demonstrate.

2.1 The incompatibility between Aristotelian logic and classical logic

To begin with, the term 'classical' in the phrase 'classical logic' is somewhat misleading. It seemingly offers an extended connection to the kind of logic developed and practiced in antiquity. It ostensibly gives the impression that it has neatly emanated from Aristotle's *Organon* or that it offers remnants that have persisted from the medieval times. At the very

least, and perhaps more decisively, it appears to suggest that it is grounded in certain fundamental principles that have originated from the Greeks. Although this perspective may offer a superficial understanding of the 'classical' aspect in the phrase 'classical logic', it requires to be nuanced. This is primarily to demarcate between those aspects of Aristotelian logic which bear and, those which fail to bear, any continuity with classical logic. It is something that is often taken for granted by philosophers when it comes to bridging between Aristotelian logic and classical logic.

There are at least two subtle distinctions to be made in this regard. The first of these distinctions concerns an incompatibility between Aristotelian logic and classical logic. The second of these distinctions draws on certain fundamental principles that have persisted from Aristotelian logic and have been unequivocally adopted by classical logic. Let us take each of these in turn. The former of these distinctions aims to demonstrate that classical logic is not a direct extension of Aristotelian logic since the two are incompatible. To think of classical logic as a replacement of Aristotelian logic would imply the inaptness of the latter and a requirement of the former. Although there is little doubt that this was the case, it is not a radical replacement as such. The birth of classical logic does not necessarily imply the death of Aristotelian logic which persisted with little change from antiquity throughout the medieval period and up until the nineteenth century. Of course, the scope which spans from Aristotle's logic found in the *Organon* right up to the dawn of classical logic with Frege and Russell is undeniably diverse. However, the development of such diversity does not manifest a radical transformation in any interesting sense. At most we might imply that classical logic is an extension of the theory of syllogism. This extension, very crudely put, enhanced the theory of syllogism with a greater expressive power that it lacked. In doing so, classical logic did not eradicate Aristotelian logic only to start afresh. Instead, it constructed a more sophisticated system upon an existing one.

However, this understanding is somewhat inaccurate. Aristotelian logic is incompatible with classical logic. This incompatibility negates a succession and continuity that might be assumed between the two logics. Priest (2006) draws a simile between the incompatibility of these two logics and Euclidean geometries in the following manner, "Aristotelian logic is incompatible with classical logic in just the same way that non-Euclidean geometries are incompatible with Euclidean geometry" (Priest, 2006, p.166). This incompatibility involves many of the immediate inferences (developed by Aristotelian logicians into an elaborate system in what is called the traditional square of opposition) having become obsolete in virtue of existential import. Contemporary logicians have abandoned most of the immediate inferences featured in the traditional square of opposition except for contradictories and obversions.

To appreciate how most of the features of the traditional square of opposition have become obsolete, it would require understanding the metaontological framework upon which classical logic operates. Quine's (naturalist) metaontological view is considered the standard framework in this regard. It is used to characterize our ontological commitments in terms of values of bound variables. Adopting the Quinean metaontological framework would consequently mean it is the acting criterion and methodology by which we assert the existence of objects. Superimposing this methodology upon atomic sentences is what allows them to obtain a semantic value, which in the case of classical logic is restricted to either true or false. If in a given sentence the subject term denotes a predicate term of a named object, which happens to be true, then that sentence is (at least) true. If, on the other hand, the subject term in a given sentence denotes a predicate term of a named object, which happens to be false, then that sentence is (at least) false. Thus, the sematic value of sentences of this kind depends on whether the denotations of the predicate terms obtain in reality or not. If the predicate term can be picked out as obtaining in virtue of the Quinean metaontological framework then it is considered true. This is because the predicate term has existential import, which ontologically commits one to

(accepting) the existence of the particular named object mentioned in the given sentence. If the predicate term cannot be picked out as obtaining in virtue of the Quinean metaontological framework then it is considered false. This is because the predicate term has no existential import, which prohibits one from ontologically committing to the existence of the particular named object mentioned in the given sentence. Based on this understanding, it appears that particular propositions that are commonly represented by I-propositions and O-propositions have existential import while universal propositions that are commonly represented by A-propositions and E- propositions do not.

Let us unpack this further by translating the syllogistic forms that are featured in the traditional square of opposition into classical logic, namely, first-order predicate logic. This will demonstrate how consistently each of the immediate inferences that constitute the square of opposition would correspond with classical logic. Priest (2006) has illustrated this in the following table:

AaB	All *A*s are *B*s	$\forall x(Ax \supset Bx)$
AeB	No *A*s are *B*s	$\neg \exists x(Ax \wedge Bx)$
AiB	Some *A*s are *B*s	$\exists x(Ax \wedge Bx)$
AoB	Some *A*s are not *B*s	$\exists x(Ax \wedge \neg Bx)$

It is evident that the A-propositions and E- propositions fail to have any existential import in first-order predicate logic. The A-proposition is translated in first-order predicate logic with a

universal quantifier, namely '∀'. This does not imply the existence of *A*s in the sense that there are *A*s and that all *A*s are *B*s. Instead, it is disallowing the existence of any *A*s which are not *B*s. This would imply that it is possible that there are no *A*s; yet if there does exist any *A*s then they are *B*s. The E-proposition infers something similar. It has been translated with the negation of an existential quantifier, namely, '¬∃'. In this instance, no *A*s are *B*s implies that no *A*s exist which are *B*s. It asserts the negation of the existence of an *A* which is a *B*.

Existential import, therefore, has some serious implications on the traditional square of opposition. As a result of these implications, it would leave the traditional square of opposition redundant. For instance, translating in first-order predicate logic would make possible for contrary propositions such as A-propositions and E-propositions to be true together. All *A*s are *B*s in A-propositions implies that it is not possible to have an *A* that is not *B*. No *A*s are *B*s in E-propositions implies that it is not possible to have an *A* that is *B*. Given that both propositions fail to have any existential import, it would imply that there are no *A*s. If there are no *A*s then there is no *A* that is not *B* *and* there is no *A* that is *B*. Both propositions would hold at one time. Subsequently, propositions which are subcontraries such as I-propositions and O-propositions would both be false when there are no *A*s. Both propositions would no longer be subcontraries.

Moreover, the subalternation relation also breaks down. Since A-propositions and E-propositions no longer have any existential import, nothing can be derived from them. This means that propositions that rely on them to be true such as I-propositions and O-propositions can no longer offer the truth-values they intend. Lastly, propositions of contraposition and conversion are also impacted by existential import. A-propositions, namely, all *A*s are *B*s would not imply its contraposition, namely, some *B*s are *A*s. This is because universal propositions fail to assert the existence of *A*s due to which there will not be some *B*s which are *A*s. The same would apply for E-propositions, namely, no *A*s are *B*s would not imply its contraposition,

namely, some not-*B*s are not-*A*s. The conversion of O-propositions is invalid and likewise so is the contraposition of I-propositions. This leaves us behind with contradictories and obversions.

Resultantly, the traditional square of opposition no longer seems to represent logical relationships that hold between its constituting propositions. The cause of this, as it has been demonstrated, is rooted in existential import. This means to say that a particular method of engaging in metaphysics and, more precisely, the way we determine our ontological commitments have been prioritized in establishing the existence of things in the world. This newer method of engaging in metaphysics and determining our ontological commitments is elaborately expressed by classical logic. This is expressed with the use of quantifiers and bound variables. Quantifiers act as linguistic devises which are used to specify the quantity of things of a certain type that satisfy some property. The variables stand in for an object of the domain of quantification, to which various properties could then be predicated. It is the value of the bound variable that captures the existential import of the object in question.

It is with the aid of such devises that classical logic functions. It is this functionality that proves to be incompatible with Aristotelian logic when translating the syllogistic forms that are featured in the traditional square of opposition into classical logic, namely, first-order predicate logic. The translation is at least one of the ways by which this incompatibility between Aristotelian logic and classical logic is manifested. Moreover, this incompatibility between the two logics would leave no room to assume that classical logic is an extension of the Aristotelian logic. As for those who insist on using the term 'extension', it is not the kind that has allowed for the succession of classical logic to have neatly emanated from Aristotelian logic without the need for serious revision. Thus, to be a little more meticulous on this matter, it would be

better suited to say that classical logic is a replacement[67] (or even an improvement[68]) of Aristotelian logic rather than its extension. This replacement would be inclusive of abandoning the traditional square of opposition as well as all those developments that have succeeded in granting classical logic a greater expressive power[69].

2.2 Fundamental axioms that have persisted from Aristotelian logic to classical logic

The latter of these distinctions aims to demonstrate that there are certain fundamental principles that have persisted from Aristotelian logic and have been unequivocally adopted by classical logic[70]. These principles or, axioms rather, are the laws of logic. The laws of logic are commonly identified as:

4. The law of identity: $\alpha \equiv \alpha$

5. The law of non-contradiction: $\neg \, (\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha)$

---

67 As stated by Beaney (2015): At the foundation of Frege's creation of quantificational logic in his *Begriffsschrift* of 1879 was his use of function–argument analysis, which replaced the subject–predicate analysis of traditional logic. Beaney, 2015, p.18)

68 This logic, now usually called classical logic (how inappropriate this name is should now be evident), was so great an improvement on traditional logic that it soon became entrenched. (Priest, 2004, p. 25)

69 This new system of logic, namely predicate calculus, involves devising (existential and universal) quantifier notations and integrating the propositional calculus. It proves to be more sophisticated and allows quantifying over more complex statements. It operates by way of "function-argument analysis" as Beaney (2012) puts it. This can be distinguished from the traditional subject-predicate analysis.

70 More generally, from traditional Aristotelian logic through modern quantification theory all the way to free logic, the following two principles are assumed in the background (for any predicate '*P*'):

(9) Everything is either *P* or not *P*.

(10) Nothing is both *P* and not *P*.

(Varzi, 2014, p. 57)

6. The law of excluded middle: $\alpha \vee \neg\alpha$

Although the law of identity is specifically attributed to Leibniz[71], the law of non-contradiction and excluded middle has been expressed by Aristotle in his Metaphysics[72]. These laws are considered to be logical truths. This means that they are statements that are taken to be true in virtue of their logical form. Take for example the law of non-contradiction, formally expressed as $\neg\,(\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha)$. It states that it cannot be the case that both α and not-α. Regardless of the actual truth value of the variable α, the formula on whole would always be true. Simply because a statement and its negation cannot both be true at any one time. The truth of this matter is one which holds no matter what the actual facts of the world may be. This kind of truth is commonly known as a tautology. A contradiction on the other hand, which would be the result of defying

---

71 Feldman (1970) has explored whether the law of identity was actually formulated by Leibniz. He concludes that Leibniz did not present any version of it; however, there is one reason for why it is associated with him. Feldman goes on to articulate this reason. What is more pertinent in this case however is what he states in the opening of his essay. This reads as follows:

> A certain fundamental view about identity is associated with Leibniz. Many contemporary philosophers call the principle which expresses this view "Leibniz' Law." Some even go further and speak of "Leibniz-identity" or "identity in Leibniz' sense." One particularly explicit statement of the more moderate point can be found in Tarski's Introduction to Logic: "Among the logical laws concerning the concept of identity the most fundamental is the following: x = y if, and only if, x has every property which y has, and y has every property which x has. This law was first stated by LEIBNIZ (although in somewhat different terms) and hence may be called LEIBNIZ' LAW." Tarski did not provide a reference to the place where, according to him, Leibniz stated that law. In fact, it is not at all clear just where or how Leibniz is supposed to have stated this principle, even though a great many philosophers assume that he did state it somewhere and somehow. (Feldman, 1970, p. 510)

72 The most indisputable of all beliefs is that contradictory statements are not at the same time true (Met. 1011b13-4). It is impossible for any one to believe the same thing to be and not to be, as some think like Heraclitus says. (Met. 1005b23-5) A thing cannot at the same time be and not be (Met. 996b29-30)

Our text, then, is *Metaphysics* Γ, 1003*a* 21–1012*b*34 (future references are abbreviated). The arguments we are concerned with occur largely in paper 4, but let us start with a quick look at the whole book. In the first three papers Aristotle explains that there is a study whose job is to investigate the most fundamental features of "being *qua* being", i.e. the properties that all entities have merely in virtue of being entities. It turns out that these are the Laws of Non- Contradiction (LNC) and Excluded Middle (LEM). (Priest, 2006, p. 8)

the law of non-contradiction, would always be false no matter what the actual facts of the world may be.

These laws did not happen to persist throughout history without being contested simply because they are attributed to Aristotle. In fact, much of Aristotle's views have encountered various degrees of criticism ever since they were expressed. However, the laws of logic have incontrovertibly been upheld as high orthodoxy throughout Western[73] intellectual history. The same goes for the most part of Islamic[74] intellectual history – with a few notable exceptions of course[75]. Even today this attitude actively contributes towards the predominant mode of

---

73 This attitude has not merely persisted, but is actively, as Beall (2004) puts it, "an entrenched 'unassailable dogma' of Western thought" (Beall, 2004, p. 3).

74 According to Ibn Sīnā, a demonstration transfers *truth, certainty and necessity* from the premises to the conclusions. Premises or *first principles* are generally divided into two parts, the first principles for *all sciences* are called *common principles* (*al-uṣūl al-mutaʿārafa*), and the first principles for every special science called *postulates* (*al-uṣūl al-mawḍūʿa*). For example, "whole is bigger than [its] part" or "contradiction is impossible", etc are common principles, and "the shortest line between two points is a straight line" is a postulate for the science of geometry. Ibn Sīnā has a vast investigation in his different writings on the *ways* common principles are acquired by the mind. A class of these common principles the called as *awwaliyyāt*, are acquired *only* through the intellective faculty. These are propositions that are *obvious* for the intellective faculty and accepting them is *necessary*. The above two examples of the common principles are of this category. Contrary to the common principles, which are certain, the postulates are *susceptible of doubt* (*mashkūk*). (M. Ardeshir, 2008, p. 58)
75 Exceptions can be found in Western intellectual history such as Priest has noted:

> With the exception of Hegel and his fellow-travellers, and whilst Aristotle's opinion on nearly every other matter has been overturned—or at least challenged—nearly every Western philosopher and logician has accepted the authority of Aristotle on this matter. There is hardly a defence of the Law since Aristotle's, worth mentioning. (Priest, 2006, p. 7)

However, attempting to locate personalities or remote instances within the Islamic intellectual history proves to be unviable. Allow me to explain my line of inquiry in this regard. After having failed in my own pursuit in attempting to find some material/resources on this matter, I contacted the following academics; Khaled El-Rouayheb, Tony Street, Peter Adamson and Ahmed Alwishah with the following question:

I was wondering if you could kindly direct me to some reading material which discusses the principles/laws of logic within medieval Arabic logic. More specifically I am looking for writings on certain Arabic logicians who may not have subscribed to the principles/laws of logic. Moreover, I would be equally interested in discussions on those logicians who did subscribe to them. I guess I'm looking for a little more beyond the obvious in terms of discussions on why most Arab logicians would have accepted the principles/laws of logic and why, if any, some rejected them. In order to explain my query a little better, take the law of non-contradiction. Although many of Aristotle's views have been contested since antiquity, the law of non-contradiction, for the most part of history, has championed an authoritative role. Priest (2006) sums this up rather succinctly in the following manner:

> With the exception of Hegel and his fellow-travellers, and whilst Aristotle's opinion on nearly every other matter has been overturned—or at least challenged—nearly every Western philosopher and logician has accepted the authority of Aristotle on this matter. There is hardly a defense of the Law since Aristotle's, worth mentioning. (Priest, 2006, p. 7)

thought in most of the Anglosphere. More relevantly, the laws of logic have been unequivocally

adopted and upheld in high regard by the founding fathers of classical logic, such as Frege and

Russell. For Frege the laws of logic were "laws on which all knowledge rests"[76] while for

Russell they were central for being able to obtain coherence[77].

According to Priest (2006) Aristotle's view regarding the law of non-contradiction has been upheld as high orthodoxy since the medieval times. The West, in particular, has considered this law to be incontrovertible to the extent that they have not felt the need to provide any further evidence for it. This attitude has not merely persisted, but is actively, as Beall (2004) puts it, — "an entrenched 'unassailable dogma' of Western thought" (Beall, 2004, p. 3). Hegel and Heidegger are probably the only few philosophers in recent Western history who out-rightly reject the law of non-contradiction with regards to their views on motion and being respectively. However, more recently with the advent of non-classical and paraconsistent logics the law of non-contradiction has encountered a more open rejection making way for a different system of logic altogether.

Returning to my query, I am interest in whether there were any Arab logicians during the medieval period who attempted to engage in a type of logic while rejecting the law of non-contradiction. This needn't mean I'm looking to impose a strict form dialetheism or paraconsistency upon certain thinkers who (if any) upheld contradictory views of some kind on the bases of metaphysical reasons - although there is a recent paper by Zolghadr (2018) which suggests that Ibn Arabi's *Wahdat al-Wujud* was a dialethic theory. I am more so interested in knowing if there were any Arab logicians who engaged in a logic which did not subscribe to the law of non-contradiction - at least a type of logic which did not uphold the law of non-contradiction to be a self-evident and/or necessary logical law/truth. Moreover, I would also be interested in reading about why Arab logicians subscribed to the law of non-contradiction aside from resorting to the reasons given by Aristotle in his metaphysics. I received the responses from all four the academics I contacted. What was interesting about three of the responses out of the four was that they each expressed that they were unaware of any Arab logicians who denied the PNC (principle of non-contradiction). I have quoted the responses below for the sake of accuracy:

> Tony street responded by saying "I don't think I've ever seen a denial of the PNC; I guess Khaled El-Rouayheb's work would come closest to that (on the part of a logician)." Khaled El-Rouayheb responded by sasying "I am not aware of Arabic logicians who question the principle of non-contradiction outright. Some scholars who discussed the liar paradox were willing to suggest that "What I say is false" is both true and false, though this appears to have been a minority opinion. You may wish to contact Professor Ahmed Alwishah who has written extensively on the liar paradox in the Arabic tradition." Ahmed Alwishah responded by saying "That is a wonderful inquiry and something worthy to be investigated. I do not know any materials written on this subject matter and I will be interested to know that."

76 Frege in a famous passage is quoted to have said that "the laws of truth are not psychological laws: they are boundary stones fixed in an eternal foundation, which our thinking can overflow, but never displace" (Frege quoted in Rumfitt, 2015, p. 1). Rumfitt (2015) goes on to clarify that for Frege the 'laws of truth' *are* the 'laws of logic'. The laws of logic, as Frege depicted them, are to be understood as entrenched 'boundary stones' that are set in an 'eternal foundation'. It's not exactly clear what he means by an 'eternal foundation' here. Although according to Beaney (1996), "Frege assumed that these laws were transcendentally given" (Beaney, 1996, p. 15).

Frege wrote that the meaning of the word 'true' is spelled out in the laws of truth; and he put the same point also this way: the laws of logic are nothing other than an unfolding of the content of the word 'true'. (Diamond, 2015, p. 65)

77 The other objection to this definition of truth is that it assumes the meaning of 'coherence' known, whereas, in fact, 'coherence' presupposes the truth of the laws of logic. Two propositions are coherent when both may be true, and are incoherent when one at least must be false. Now in order to know whether two propositions can both be true, we must know such truths as the law of contradiction. For example, the two propositions, 'this tree is a beech'

One notable way to appreciate classical logic's commitment to the laws of logic is to contrast it with paraconsistent logic[78]. Priest (2007) pertinently states that "perhaps the major motivation behind paraconsistency in the modern period has been the thought that there are many situations where we wish to handle inconsistent information in a sensible way – and specifically, where we have to infer from it" (Priest, 2007, p. 129)[79]. Paraconsistent logic is

---

and 'this tree is not a beech', are not coherent, because of the law of contradiction. But if the law of contradiction itself were subjected to the test of coherence, we should find that, if we choose to suppose it false, nothing will any longer be incoherent with anything else. Thus the laws of logic supply the skeleton or framework within which the test of coherence applies, and they themselves cannot be established by this test. (Russell, 2008, p. 81)

78 The question at the intersection of truth and falsity is whether it (the intersection) could be non-empty but non-trivial—whether *some but not all* contradictions could be true. Classical logic, and intuitionistic logic, for that matter, give a swift answer: No. In each such logic, the so-called 'independent argument' goes through:

> (1) Assume that $A \wedge \neg A$ is true
>
> (2) By (1) and Simplification, A is true
>
> (3) By (2) and Addition, $A \vee B$ is true
>
> (4) By (1) and Simplification, $\neg A$ is true
>
> (5) But, then, by (3), (4), and Disjunctive Syllogism, B is true

The upshot is that any contradiction is explosive if each of the foregoing steps is valid. Paraconsistent logics, by definition, are not explosive. A consequence relation $\vdash$, however defined, is said to be *explosive* if $A, \neg A \vdash B$ holds for arbitrary A and B. A consequence relation is said to be *paraconsistent* if and only if it is not explosive. (Beall, 2004, p. 5-6)

79 As Priest, Tanaka and Weber say

> The contemporary logical orthodoxy has it that, from contradictory premises, anything can
>
> be inferred (…) Inconsistency, according to received wisdom, cannot be coherently reasoned
>
> about (…) Paraconsistent logic challenges this orthodoxy. A logical consequence relation is
>
> said to be paraconsistent if it is not explosive. [24]

Similarly, in the recent book by Carnielli and Coniglio, it is said that

> Paraconsistent logics are able to deal with contradictory scenarios, avoiding triviality by
>
> means of the rejection of the Principle of Explosion. [6, p. 3]

In a nutshell, as Ripley puts it

> paraconsistency is a *non*entailment claim. [28, p. 773]

thus a host of logical systems (Logics of Formal Inconsistency – LFIs) which engages with inconsistent information while retaining as much of the classical machinery as possible. The primary method in virtue of which it engages with inconsistent information, and which distinguishes it from classical logic, is its non-compliance of the law of non-contradiction.

In classical logic a theory Γ is by definition *consistent* if no pairs of contradictory propositions $\alpha, \neg\alpha$ are deducible from Γ. If, however, a pair of contradictory propositions $\alpha, \neg\alpha$ are deducible from Γ then it is inconsistent. It is evident that being consistent and inconsistent in this respect is contingent upon the compliance and non-compliance of the law of non-contradiction. Violating the law of non-contradiction would allow for anything to logically follow. This is referred to as *ex contradictione sequitur quodlibet* in Latin. More commonly it is known as the Principle of Explosion. The principle of explosion in classical logic is a logically valid inference[80]. This means that triggering a contradiction would logically entail everything: $\alpha, \neg\alpha \models \beta$, for all α and β. Given that anything logically follows from a contradiction it would imply triviality. Systems of paraconsistent logic, however, circumvent this issue by engaging with contradictions in a manner where explosion is considered as an invalid inference[81]. On this view, a contradiction would not logically entail everything: $\alpha, \neg\alpha \not\models \beta$. Consequently, paraconsistent logic can essentially be considered as a non-entailment claim. This shift from classical (two-valued) logic not only opens the prospect for paraconsistent logic to engage with inconsistent information, but it does so within the province of rationality since it circumvents

---

Barrio, Pailos and Szmuc, 2018, p. 90)

[80] It is true that Explosion is a valid principle of inference in standard twentieth-century accounts of validity, such as those of intuitionism and the inappropriately called 'classical logic'. (Priest, 2004, p. 24)

[81] Paraconsistent logics are logical systems that rebel against the classical principle, usually dubbed *Explosion*, that a contradiction implies everything, or that from a contradiction, everything follows. (Barrio, Pailos and Szmuc, 2018, p. 89)

triviality. The primary difference between classical logic and paraconsistent logics can thus be reduced to conforming to and defying the law of non-contradiction respectively.

It is therefore evident that laws of logic are fundamental to the functionality of classical logic – much like a defining feature. The significance that is granted to the laws of logic can be appreciated in virtue of syntactical consistency – by which I mean the sort of structure and form that allows us to determine what follows from what. The laws of logic act as theoretical guarantors in this sense that warrant syntactical consistency within the system of classical logic. If in this case the logical system in question, namely classical logic, encounters a syntactical inconsistency of the form p and $\neg p$ for some proposition p[82] it would render it unsound and trivial. For classical logic to be able to function in this codified manner and distinguish logical consistencies from inconsistencies is crucial to its theoretical integrity for at least two reasons. Jacquette (2010) presents these as follows:

> An inference offered from within an inconsistent logic is necessarily unsound, and hence deprived of the possibility of establishing the truth of any proposition by logical demonstration. Secondly, an inconsistent classical logic is trivial, in the sense that any proposition whatsoever can be validly deduced from an inconsistent assumption set. (Jacquette, 2010, p. 20)

2.3 An intuitive appeal to the laws of logic

---

82 In the standard view of a paradox, if plausible premisses yield a contradiction, given accepted principles of inference, then either premisses or concepts employed in the paradox must be rejected. This is so because, in the standard view, if the premisses yield a contradictory conclusion, classical logic impels us to reject one or more of the premisses, or to reject the conclusion as incoherent, or the paradox set as invalid. (Armour-Garb, 2004, p. 122)

Aside from these reasons there appears to be a more practical motive which seemingly makes a strong appeal to our 'intuitive sense of deductions'[83] as to why classical logic is earnestly committed to the laws of logic. Locke speaks of a very similar type of intuition that grants man a form of logical capacity allowing him to exercise reason while hardly possessing any knowledge of how to construct a syllogism[84]. We may be able appreciate this when considering a child, who despite having had no schooling in formal logic, has his/her very first encounter with arbitrating in matters of syntactical consistency. Given that such a child has had at least *some* exposure to an environment which is indicative of deductive reasoning, he/she shall possess a "pre-theoretical but still developed sense of what follows from what" as Rumfitt (2015) puts it. It is this intuitive sense of deduction that instinctively grants an individual the aptitude in being able to appreciate syntactical consistency. It acts as the pre-theoretical foundation against which one can determine as to whether a given logical system is syntactically consistent or not. This seems to be a strong enough reason to have persuaded Rumfitt (2015) that classical logic occupies a default status[85].

Classical logic, for Rumfitt (2015), is therefore codified by a set of foundational principles which conform to our 'intuitive sense of deductions'. The conformity between such principles and our 'intuitive sense of deductions' allows us to acknowledge the kind of structure and form in virtue of which we are able to determine what follows from what, namely syntactical consistency. Any attempt in obtaining this type of consistency would necessitate conforming

---

83 This particular term is used by Rumfitt (2015).

84 Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book IV, paper xvii, §4.

85 This, it seems to me, provides the strongest reason for according default status to classical logic, for—with only one class of exceptions—classically valid arguments conform to our intuitive sense of deductions whose conclusions follow from their premisses. Setting aside the exceptions, the classical natural deduction rules seem, when we first meet them, to codify norms of deductive reasoning that we have implicitly followed for years. (Rumfitt, 2015, p. 15)

to the laws of logic. Simply because defying the laws of logic would lead to a syntactical inconsistency. Thus, the laws of logic would occupy a crucial role if they are to conform to our 'intuitive sense of deductions'. Of course, whether this 'conformity' is one which completely corresponds to our 'intuitive sense of deductions' or is one which bears epistemological gaps is an interesting question[86]. Nevertheless, the idea that there exists an association between the laws of logic and our 'intuitive sense of deductions' ostensibly grants a significant status to the laws of logic. This status is particularly espoused by classical logic on the basis that the laws of logic are fundamental axioms in virtue of which it operates.

Yet, there must be more substance to why the laws of logic are so implicitly compelling to our 'intuitive sense of deductions'. Surly, being able to determine syntactical consistency must yield something of significant cognitive worth. This cognitive worth needn't be confined to the utility and practical applications that ideas have to the actual world[87]. Instead, it ought to be of the kind which also encompasses abstract notions that are philosophically conceivable and thus intelligible – granting one a sense of cognitive satisfaction[88]. One such worth is being able to make sense of things. Rescher (2017) makes an unequivocal association between philosophy

---

86 Weininger, however, thinks that obeying the laws of logic is something we ought to do precisely because it belongs to the strict moral duties we have toward ourselves. He thereby holds that logic is intrinsically categorically normative (and thus falls under 4A), but for reasons quite different from those found in the moral science conception of logic.
According to the moral science conception, logic is intrinsically categorically normative because it is based on rationality itself (hence rationality is intrinsic to logic) and is also an *integral part of* human morality, namely the part that consists in justifying moral judgments and decisions, including direct moral arguments and reflective equilibrium. (Hanna, 2006, p. 205-206)

87 It should be noted that I differ with Putnam (1994) on this matter. According to Putnam (1994) to give sense to a formal system is not only to make it intelligible and be able to interpret it, but to be able to do these things so it can be applied. Therefore, for Putnam (1994) being able to specify the application of a formal system is also how 'sense' ought to be characterised. I am saying that we need not have an application for a formal system for it to be sensical. Being intelligible is a sufficient condition for having sense.

88 The discipline [philosophy] seeks to bring rational order, system, and intelligibility to the often confusing diversity of our cognitive affairs enabling us to find our way about in the world in a practically effective and cognitively satisfying way. (Resecher, 2017, p. 33)

in general and the project of making sense of things. He does so while inferring that the abandonment of philosophy would imply withdrawing from the project of making sense of things[89]. Moore (2017) purports a similar view. For Moore (2017) "philosophy is an attempt, by humans, from their unique position in the world, to make sense both of themselves and of that position." (Moore, 2017, p. 45)

However, the phrase 'make sense' is somewhat ambiguous and requires clarification. Moore appreciates this by referring to it as "a polymorphous term". Elsewhere, while speaking on metaphysics, Moore (2012) draws on the meaning of the phrase 'to make sense of things' in a little more detail. He proposes possible ways in which the phrase can be comprehended, such as the "meaning", "purpose", or "explanation" of something[90]. Nonetheless, whatever understanding one derives from such synonyms, it would undoubtedly be ambiguous. Given this, Moore (2012) goes on to make an important distinction between the ways in which the term 'to make sense' ought to be apprehended.

> When 'make sense' is used intransitively, there is a further range of associations. It is then equivalent not to 'understand' but to 'be intelligible', 'admit of understanding', perhaps even 'be rational'. (Moore, 2012, p. 5)

---

89 To those who are prepared simply to abandon philosophy, to withdraw from the whole project of trying to make sense of things, we can have little to say. (How can one reason with those who deny the pointfulness and propriety of reasoning?) (Rescher, 2017, p. 33)

90 The 'sense' in question may be the meaning of something, the purpose of something, or the explanation for something. This is connected to the fact that a near-synonym for 'make sense of' is 'understand' and the range of things that someone might naturally be said to understand (or not) is both vast and very varied. It includes languages, words, phrases, innuendos, theories, proofs, books, people, fashions, patterns of behaviour, suffering, the relativity of simultaneity, and many more. Thus making sense of things can embrace on the one hand finding something that is worth living for, perhaps even finding the meaning of life, and on the other hand discovering how things work, for instance by ascertaining relevant laws of nature. I do not want to draw a veil over *any* of these. The generality of metaphysics will no doubt prevent it from embracing some of them, but that is another matter. "Moore, 2012, p. 5)

Considering Moore's (2012) view, it not only seems befitting, but somewhat intuitive, to conceive of 'making sense' in virtue of being rational[91] – particularly within the purview of philosophy. Any attempt to rationalise in the absence of making sense, or vice versa, in the most basic forms, would apparently lead to an inconsistency. 'Inconsistency' may be understood as antithetical to rationality. In this sense it would be an equivalent term to 'irrationality'. Irrationality, as Davidson (2004) puts it, "is a mental process or state—a rational process or state—gone wrong" (Davidson, 2004, p. 169). Rationality's going wrong would imply its failure to fulfil its essential role of reasoning. In this case rationality would be contrasted with 'a-rational' or 'non-rational'[92]. A failure to reason in ways that unequivocally ensues forms of irrationality would be indicative of nonsensicalness.

Classical logic is certainly a predominant candidate that offers to express rationality in a manner that is not just consistent but representative of mathematics[93]. Take the elementary principles of mathematics such as the ones expressed by basic arithmetic, "7 + 4 = 11" for instance. Arithmetic calculations of this kind are more than often considered as necessary truths and a priori. Mathematical propositions such as this warrant an overwhelming degree of certainty. It is in the same way that classical logic is established upon elementary principles,

---

91 Rationality, in broader terms, is divided into theoretical and practical perspectives[91]. A theoretical perspective of rationality focuses on the epistemology of belief. It attempts to determine what qualifies as rational and whether it ought to be believed on such accounts of rationality. A practical perspective of rationality focuses on determining which actions, intentions, and desires qualify as rational.

92 'Rational' has at least two relevant senses: capable of reasoning ('RATIONAL', contrasting with 'a-rational' or 'non-rational') and: using this capacity properly or well ('rational ', contrasting with 'irrational'). 'Rational', in turn, has a stronger and a weaker interpretation: in conformity with the agent's goals and beliefs ('weak rationality') and: in conformity with the agent's reasonable goals and justified beliefs ('strong rationality'). (Haack, 1993, p. 177)

93 Formal rationality concerns formal principles of good reasoning-the mathematical laws of logic, probability, decision, or game theory. These principles appear, at first sight, to be far removed from everyday rationality-from how people think and act in everyday life. Rarely in daily life do we praise or criticize each other for obeying or violating the laws of logic or probability. (Charter and Oaksford, 2002, p. 137)

namely the laws of logic. These are also considered as necessary truths and a priori. However, the connection between mathematics and logic is more profound than merely sharing elementary principles that are necessary truths and a priori. Perhaps this can be best appreciated in acknowledging how Frege began assigning numerical values to propositional statements. This was a novel move by Frege in which he considered propositional statements to have an equivalent utility that is represented by mathematical functions which would yield truth-values. It was precisely this use of function-argument analysis that laid the foundation for classical logic having replaced the subject-predicate analysis of Aristotelian logic.

Given the intertwined nature of mathematics and classical logic; defying the principles upon which they have been established would, by definition, obstruct syntactical consistency. Mathematical and propositional functions from this perspective would not be able to guarantee the sort of structure and form that would allow us to determine what follows from what. Consequently, such defective functions would no longer serve as a truth preserving system. Conceptual defects of this kind would become a significant hindrance for the classical system of logic in being able make sense of things. In this respect we could think of the laws of logic as fundamental axioms that grant classical logic the theoretical aptitude to be able to make sense of things.

3. These assumptions, i.e., the laws of logic (most notably the law of non-contradiction), constrain our metaphysics

Classical logic is a particular system of reasoning that grants us the sort of structure and form in virtue of which we can determine what follows from what – i.e., syntactical consistency. We can also think of this as a method to ascertain inferential/sequential (logical) order that is indicative of validity – the kind with which we make sense of things. This is achieved by

adhering to the fundamental laws of logic. However, it is worth considering the cost at which, if any, we are to make sense of things. To put it differently, would my attempt in making sense of things, by way of adhering to the laws of logic, encroach upon my metaphysical understanding or belief about any given matter?

3.1 The cost of making sense of things in virtue of the law of non-contradiction

Let us explore this question. Take one of the *more* fundamental of the three laws of logic, namely the law of non-contradiction[94]. Suppose that I am committed to upholding this law as being (*necessarily*) true in a metaphysical sense[95]. By this I mean that the same object cannot both have and not have the same property; formally expressed as: $\forall x \, \forall F \, \neg \, (F\,(x) \land \neg\, F\,(x))$[96]. This specific version of the law of non-contradiction is ontologically affirming how matters or states of affairs *cannot* be[97]. Despite this, let us say I happen to subscribe to a particular

---

94 I shall direct my attention on the law of non-contradiction and not the law of excluded middle or the law of identity. The primary reason for this is that the law of non-contradiction is more fundamental in the sense that the law of excluded can be derived from it in virtue of De Morgan's laws as well as the principle of double negation.

95 The metaphysical formulation of LNC takes a form familiar from Aristotle (Metaphysics 1005b19–20), although my proposed formulation is somewhat weaker, defined as follows:

> (LNC) The same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect and in the same domain. (Tahko, 2014, p. 239)

96 This can also be expressed as: $\forall x \, \forall F \, \neg \, \Diamond \, (Fx \, \& \, \neg \, Fx)$; meaning 'for any object x, and any property F, it is not possibly the case that x is both F and not-F'. Or alternatively: $\forall x \, \forall F \, \Box \, \neg \, (Fx \, \& \, \neg \, Fx)$ meaning 'for any object x, and any property F, it is necessarily not the case that x is both F and not-F'.

97 "Ontological formulation: *The same property cannot belong and not belong to a single object at the same time.* By 'object' I understand, with Meinong, anything that is 'something' and not 'nothing'; by 'property' I mean anything can be predicated of an object. (Łukasiewicz (1910): 51)" (Berto, 2007, p. 14)

Moreover, Tahko (2009) has provided a metaphysical interpretation of the law of non-contradiction in which he says,

> At its simplest, the metaphysical interpretation of LNC amounts to this: the entities of the mind-independent reality are plausibly governed by some sort of principles (as otherwise there would be no order in our experience of them), that is, there are some constraints as to what kind of properties a certain kind of entity can and cannot have, and further, some of these properties are mutually exclusive. For instance, a particle cannot both have and not have a charge at the same time, or an object cannot be both

contradictory belief that I uphold as being true in some sense (I shall go on to demonstrate this very point in virtue of an absolute ineffable God of Islam). Given this, would the law of non-contradiction constrain my metaphysical belief? That is, would my commitment to the law of non-contradiction prevent me from accepting a particular contradictory belief as being true?

It appears somewhat evident that my commitment to the law of non-contradiction imposes a genuine constraint on the way in which I conceive the structure of reality[98]. The law of non-contradiction ontologically prohibits me from accepting/asserting the existence of a contradictory matter or state of affairs; subsequently barring me from accepting/asserting its truth[99]. Given that I am logically proscribed from accepting/asserting an ontological contradiction, it would imply that my metaphysical conception of reality should be insusceptible to contradictions. My adherence to classical logic would thus reveal that it is not metaphysically neutral. This is because my adherence to classical logic, and more specifically to its laws, constrains my metaphysical conception/belief about a given contradictory matter or state of affair. It does so by dictating to me that a contradiction amounts to a logical

---

green and red all over at the same time. It seems that reality just *is* such that it conforms to the law of non-contradiction. (Tahko, 2009, p. 33)

98 This is a view that Tahko (2009) has defended in *The Law of Non-Contradiction as a Metaphysical Principle*. He opens his paper clearly stating his that "I will also defend the status of LNC as the best candidate for a fundamental metaphysical principle—if there are any principles which constrain the structure of reality, then LNC is certainly our most likely candidate." (Tahko, 2009, p. 32)

99 The so called Bar-Hillel-Carnap paradox (see [3], p. 229) has already suggested, half century ago, the clash between the notions of contradiction and semantic information: the less probable a statement is, the more informative it is, and so contradictions carry the maximum amount of information, and in the light of standard logic are, as a famous quote by Bar-Hillel and Carnap has it, "too informative to be true". This is a difficult philosophical problem for standard logic, which is forced to equate triviality and contradiction, and to regard all contradictions as equivalent, as the following example illustrates. If two auto technicians tell me that the battery of my car is flat, and its electrical system out of order, and add all the (potentially infinite) statements about car electrics, I have an excessive amount of information, including a huge amount of irrelevant information. Classically, this trivial amount of information is exactly the same as the information conveyed by the car technicians telling me a contradiction, such as the battery of my car is flat and that it is not flat. However, if one of the car technicians tells me (among his statements) that the battery is flat, and the other that the battery is not flat, between them they are contradictory, but now I know where the problem is! (Carnielli and Coniglio, 2016, p. 2)

impossibility, making it necessarily false. Moreover, it insists that a contradiction amounts to trivialism. Accordingly, if I decide not to comply with the law of non-contradiction, it will fundamentally compromise the logical possibility in being able to obtain a consistent idea or belief. In this sense that the law of non-contradiction dictates what can and cannot be metaphysically accepted/asserted on the grounds of logical possibility and impossibility respectively. If the law of non-contradiction presupposes any given metaphysical views, then it seems reasonable to call into question its role as a neutral arbiter of metaphysical disputes.

3.2 The ontological status of contradictions

Prior to discussing the issue of neutrality, it would be worth briefly drawing on at least two underlying assumptions with respect to upholding contradictions as being true (in some sense) from a metaphysical perspective. The first of these assumptions has to do with the ontological status of contradictions, namely, whether we can determine their existence in reality. The second of these assumptions has to do with *why* our conceptions of reality ostensibly conform to the law of non-contradiction. With regards to the former of these matters Priest (1999) thinks that the observable word, namely all that is observably the case, is only inconsistent if and only if some contradictory instances $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ are both true and observable. However, according to Priest (1999) such inconsistencies are not observable. If any such inconsistencies had been observable, then we would have perceived them. Aside from experiencing the odd visual illusion, we do not perceive any such inconsistencies. Therefore, our perceptions of the world are entirely consistent, which in turn, makes the observable world consistent[100.] While

---

100 Priest's argument is as follows: Consider the observable world, i.e., all that is observably the ease. If there were inconsistencies in this, it would follow from the above that we would perceive them. But apart from the odd visual illusion, we do not: our perceptions of the world are entirely consistent. Hence, the observable world is consistent. (Priest, 1999, p. 444)

responding to Priest (1999), Beall (2000) agrees with his conclusion. Nevertheless, for Beall (2000), the argument which Priest (1999) employs in arriving at his conclusion is flawed. The objection which Beall (2000) focuses on in demonstrating this flaw is as follows:

> OBJECTION: We can grant, with Priest, that if there were inconsistencies in the observable world – for example, if $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ were in the observable world – then such inconsistencies *could be* seen. After all, being such that *p could be seen* is just what it is for *p* to be *observable*. Thus, if something is 'in the observable world', then it *could be* seen. That is not at issue. The real trouble is that Priest makes a much stronger claim: namely, that if $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ were in the observable world, it *would be* seen. This, however, doesn't follow; 'can' simply does not imply 'would'. For this reason, Priest's argument fails. (Beall, 2000, p. 114)

The point at which Priest (1999) assumes that 'can' implies 'would' is where his argument breaks down. More generically however, there are at least three claims that are all in some way problematic with Priest's (1999) argument. Beall and Colyvan (2001) have summed these claims up in the following manner:

   i.   If there are observable contradictions, we would observe them;

   ii.   We would recognise an observable contradiction if we saw one; and

   iii.   We do not see any contradictions.

<div align="right">(Beall and Colyvan, 2001, p. 564)</div>

The first of these claims is conditional. That is, we can only grant the existence of contradictions, namely instances of $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$, *if* they are observed. The second of these claims is

probably the most crucial of the three. It claims that we are in an epistemologically privileged position to be able to recognise and identify contradictions if we saw them. Undermining this claim would weaken the first and third claim since it would question our epistemological ability in perceiving (or more broadly, knowing) the ontological status of contradictions. The third of these claims inferentially follows from the second. We would only be able to affirm the third claim given the second claim. However, as Beall (2000) puts it, even if we accept the first of these claims (for argument's sake), why should we accept the second of these to be true. In order to be in a position where we can know or epistemologically verify that we have not observed any contradictions would imply that we have at least some idea how they look like. Yet, I don't think we can know or epistemologically verify how contradictions would actually look like – even if we did see them somehow. This position needn't imply that we ought to rule out their existence (intrinsically) in any conclusive sense either[101]. Thus, to determine the existence/ontological status of contradictions in virtue of our epistemological ability in observing them seems a little over presumptuous on behalf of Priest (1999).

3.3 Why our conceptions of reality conform to the law of non-contradiction

---

[101] I should like to make an important point about the context in which I am speaking about the existence of contradictions. For instance, Arenhart (2018) speaks about the source for contradictions which he has selected to work with. He states,

> Of course, it is still open to the friend of contradictions to look for contradictions in other places, for instance, mystic or religious beliefs. However, as we mentioned before, in this paper we shall discuss only the case of using science as a source for true contradictions (and in doing so, we follow da Costa). This restriction poses no serious drawback on our investigation, it seems, given that science seems to provide our most reliable guide to how the world looks like. (Arenhart, 2018, p. 17)

Arenhart (2018) has clearly chosen to work with contradictions within the context of science. I, on the other hand, have not restricted myself in this sense. In fact, I shall go on to speak about contradictions from a mystical and religious perspective.

Given our epistemological inability to know, and thus determine the existence/ontological status of contradictions, it leaves open the possibility of their existence (intrinsically). Considering this, the question would be, irrespective of our epistemological capabilities, do contradictions exist (intrinsically)? I don't think there is any conclusive way to answer this question independent of our epistemological capabilities. If there is a *possibility* that contradictions intrinsically exist, then such a possibility would be grounded in our epistemological inability to conclusively rule out their existence altogether. Alternatively, if there is no *possibility* that contradictions intrinsically exist, then such a possibility would be grounded in our epistemological inability to conclusively admit their existence. Each of the positions concedes to the limits of our epistemological ability and thus accepts that the matter is indeterminate. However, an indeterminate view on this matter would have a direct consequence on the law of non-contradiction. If we are unable to reach a conclusive view on the existence of contradictions then, the law of non-contradiction cannot prescribe a necessary truth[102].

This brings us to the latter of these matters, namely, if contradictions can *possibly* exist then why do our conceptions of reality – at least ostensibly – conform to the law of non-contradiction. That is, *why* is it that the way in which we perceive the observable world is such where our observations do not encounter contradictory states of affairs? In response to this question Tahko (2009) proposes that,

---

102 What does it mean to say that there is a notion of logical necessity? I mean this: there is a sense of 'necessary' for which ⌜ It is necessary that *A* ⌝ implies and is implied by ⌜ It is logically contradictory that not *A* ⌝. (Rumfitt, 2010, p. 35)

The metaphysical reading of the law of non-contradiction suggests an answer to the question why our observations conform to the principle: because LNC is a true metaphysical principle concerning the world. (Tahko, 2009, p. 35)

Tahko's (2009) perspective on this matter only qualifies under the condition that the law of non-contradiction is taken to be a (necessarily) true metaphysical principle concerning the world. However, based on the analysis above, the possibility of the existence of contradictions would no longer exemplify the law of non-contradiction as a necessarily true metaphysical principle concerning the world. Thus, in addressing this matter we may assume that we have some kind of inherent '*consistency filters*' – the sort that refine our sensory perception in ways which precludes us from observing contradictions. Priest[103] (1999) and Beall[104] (2006) refuse to accept that we have any such filters. According to Priest (1999) there is no empirical evidence to suppose that there are any such consistency filters. In fact, for him there is every reason to suppose that we do not have consistency filters. Beall (2009) supports Priest (1999) in that we don't have good reason to assume that we have consistency filters[105].

---

103 Might it not be the case, though, that our cognitive functioning makes it impossible for us to see certain conjoined states of affairs? Specifically, it might be suggested that our perceptual mechanisms impose a 'consistency filter' on what we see. But there is no empirical evidence, that I know of, to suppose that there is such a filter. Indeed, there is every reason to suppose that there is not. (Priest, 1999, p. 444)

104 OBJECTION: Let α and ~α each be observable. It doesn't follow that α ∨ ~α could be seen--by us, the ones who matter. After all, it may be that we have *consistency filters* the effect of which is that we cannot observe contradictions, despite each conjunct (as it were) being individually observable.

REPLY: Priest considers this objection. His reply is that we have no good reason to think that we have consistency filters, and that we have good reason to think that we do *not* have them. Priest is right, I think, with respect to the former, weaker claim, and few would be inclined to disagree on this. (Beall, 2000, p. 113)

105 . . . His reply is that we have no good reason to think that we have consistency filters, and that we have good reason to think that we do not have them. Priest is right . . . (Beall, 2000, p. 113)

I do not anticipate resolving the issue as to whether our cognitive functionality does or does not imply (or include) consistency filters. Nevertheless, there are at least two alternate points worth considering here. The first is that the way we arrive at any conclusion on this issue would hinge on what exactly we take 'consistency' and 'inconsistency' to amount to. A form of radical semantic scepticism would impede an association between any given meaning of the terms and the world. Sider (2011) refers to this association as "semantic glue"[106]. On this view, any given conception of a consistent or inconsistent reality would thus be a representation of how well we configure and align the connotations we technically assign to, such words and our perceptions of the world. This means to say that asserting 'the world is consistent or inconsistent' would be positing our conceptions of such terms on the world. While our conceptions of 'consistency' and 'inconsistency' needn't be ones which actually *carves nature at the joints*[107] so to speak.

---

[106] One of the "problems" Lewis used his notion of naturalness to solve was the problem of radical semantic skepticism (1983*b*; 1984). The problem is one in metasemantics. How do words (or thoughts—but let's stick to words) get their meanings? What "semantic glue" attaches them to the world? There are different views about the nature of the semantic glue, but on nearly all of them, the glue doesn't seem to be sticky enough; it apparently cannot secure meaning with sufficient determinacy. Most roughly put: what I mean by 'pig' is surely determined by such facts as that I've always said 'pig' when in the presence of pigs; but why do such facts determine that by 'pig' I mean pigs, rather than pigs-I've-encountered-in-the-past, or pigs-in-my-immediate-vicinity, or pigs-before-2011 A.D.-or-cows-afterwards or …? (Sider, 2011, p. 28)

[107] I take this phrase in the manner in which Sider (2011) has explained it.

Realism about *predicate* structure is fairly widely accepted. Many—especially those influenced by David Lewis—think that some predicates (like 'green') do a better job than others (like 'grue') at marking objective similarities, carving nature at the joints. But this realism should be extended, beyond predicates, to expressions of other grammatical categories, including logical expressions. Let "there schmexists an *F* " mean that the property of being an *F* is expressed by some predicate in some sentence of this book. 'Schmexists' does not carve at the joints; it is to the quantifier 'there exists' as 'grue' is to 'green'. Likewise, the question of joint-carving can be raised for predicate modifiers, sentential connectives, and expressions of other grammatical categories. (Structure is a generalization and extension of Lewisian naturalness.)

I connect structure to fundamentality. The joint-carving notions are the fundamental notions; a fact is fundamental when it is stated in joint-carving terms. A central task of metaphysics has always been to discern the ultimate or fundamental reality underlying the appearances. I think of this task as the investigation of reality's structure. (Sider, 2011, p. i)

The second is that it appears somewhat difficult to consider the rejection of consistency filters without an underlying compliance to some form of metaphysical realism (understood in the broadest way). To appreciate this point, consider if someone upheld that there is a discontinuity between our perception of the world and how the world actually is. To counteract the discontinuity between our perception and the world, one could imply that it is possible that we have consistency filters that repel contradictory instances and allow for us to perceive the world in the uniformity that we do. Though, even if our cognitive functionality operated with the aid of consistency filters in allowing us to perceive the world in complete conformity with the law of non-contradiction, it would fail to tell us anything about how the world actually is. Instead, this would be nothing more than an insight into the sorts of concepts we apply in attempting to describe or make sense of the world. Tahko (2009) happens to reflect upon this very possibility, in which he states,

> But consider what would happen if there really were a fundamental discontinuity between the world and the concepts that we use in describing it, namely, if the world did not conform to LNC. How would we be able to express *anything* about the world if this were the case? Perhaps there is a sceptical worry here which cannot be overcome, but anyone who takes this path would be on a slippery slope towards solipsism: if the consistency of the world is only an illusion, then you cannot trust any of your interactions with it, including your interactions with other people. Surely this is an infeasible position. (Tahko, 2009, p. 36)

There is little doubt that this position appears to be epistemologically intimidating – at least the way in which it is presented seems to suggest so. Falling victim to a radical form of (semantic and/or metaphysical) scepticism or subscribing to sceptically motivated outlooks which are

prone to a type of solipsism would place us in an epistemologically uncomfortable position. Nonetheless, regardless of how daunting the implications may turn out to be, it hardly gives us any substantive reasons to dismiss such an anti-realist outlook as a (theoretically) infeasible position. I concede that the implications that stem from a fundamental discontinuity, between the world and the concepts we employ to describe or make sense of it, are most certainly inimical on many practical fronts. Such as our interaction with the world and with people. However, representing the system of classical logic (or more specifically the law of non-contradiction) while disproportionately directing its aim at feasibility in being able to describe or make sense of the world seems partial. To demonstrate the emphasis on logic's pragmatic function in the world, take Sher (2010) for instance. Sher (2013, 2016) thinks that logic requires grounding in both the world and the mind. While exemplifying logic's grounding in reality[108] she examines its pragmatic function in virtue of whether it "works" in the world or not[109]. On this point Sher (2010) asserts that a logical theory must work in the world much like a physical theory. The working of a logical theory, in fact, is more crucial than the working of a physical theory. That is because physical laws are dependent upon logical laws and not contrariwise. Thus, a useful logical theory cannot conflict with how the world works.

---

108 Sher (2010) uses "world" and "reality" synonymously.

109 (iii) *Logic Has to "Work" in the World.* It is a simple and straightforward observation that logical theory, like physical theory, is correct or incorrect in the sense that it either "works" or "does not work" in the world. In the same way that the use of, say, defective aerodynamical principles can cause an airplane to malfunction, so the use of defective logical principles can result in its malfunctioning. If in designing an airplane we rely on incorrect logical laws—e.g., the law of "affirming the consequent", or the "new Leibniz law" (see (v) below)—we are likely to cause *drag* when *lift* is needed, a right turn when a left is intended, etc. A flawed logic can cause havoc in an airplane no less than a flawed physics. This is not to say that we have no latitude in constructing our logical (or physical) theory, but there is a very real sense in which our logical theory (like our physical theory) either works or does not work in the world. A useful logical theory has to avoid conflict with the world, just like any other theory. Adopting an influential argument from the philosophy of science, we may say that it would be a complete mystery that logic worked in the world if it were not tuned to the world. (Sher, 2010, p. 355-356)

3.4 Ontological contradictions

The practical appeal to classical logic and more specifically to the law of non-contradiction is overwhelmingly evident – both with respect to its conformity and defiance. Nevertheless, on a theoretical front, I believe more serious attention ought to be invested in entertaining "epistemologically intimidating" positions that are more than often cast off as infeasible. Irrespective of how positions such as radical forms of scepticism and/or solipsism have been sternly tainted as epistemologically reprehensible; to discard them primarily based on their infeasibility (practical application) in the external world seems somewhat un-philosophical. Moreover, the paradoxical implications which are brought about in universally applying the law of non-contradiction to *every* state of affair should equally be considered. This needn't be confined to the more obvious sematic paradoxes but should, more pertinently, explore the possibility of ontological ones also. Consider for instance the following example of reality depicted and espoused by the twentieth-century Japanese thinker Nishida. Bliss and Priest (2018) write:

> What emerges from [Nishida's] writings in influential texts such as his *Basho* is the idea that to be an object just is to be enplaced – what it is for an object to be a cat is to lie in the place 'being a cat'. In the same way, a cat lies in the place 'being a mammal, and a mammal lies in the place of 'being an animal', and so on and so forth. This cannot go on forever, thinks Nishida, and there is the ultimate place – the place of all places – which for Nishida is absolute nothingness (which also happens to be pure consciousness). Importantly, if the place of all places is to do the work required of it, it must not, itself, lie in a place; which is just to say it cannot be an object. However, this is where the trouble begins. Indeed, as we have stated above, we know that, according to Nishida, absolute nothingness does not lie in any place. But it turns out that what this

means is that absolute nothingness lies in at least one place, which is the place of not lying in a place! So it turns out that for Nishida, the ultimate ground both is and isn't an object, which means it both is and isn't fundamental. (Bliss and Priest, 2018, p. 30)

Similar examples of ontological contradictions that are directly concerned with how the world works[110] can be found in thinkers from Europe[111] such as Hegel's account of motion[112] and Heidegger's concept of being[113]. Hegel's account of motion was starkly different to the conventional way of thinking about motion. Naturally it would be considered for an object to be in motion at any given time t to occupy some place at t while occupying different places at times instantaneously before or after t. As intuitive as this scenario may sound, it seems compatible with the object in question having zero velocity at t. Hegel had thus proposed that for an object to be in motion at t is for it to be at some place, p, and some alternative place, q, at the same time. This meant that the object would be and not be at place p at time t – while it could be at both places p and q at time t. Heidegger's concept of being somewhat resembles Nishida's depiction stated above. Heidegger was interested in being – that is, what it means to *be*. In his laborious quest he asserted that whatever is *being* does not itself possess *being*. This meant that *being* does not constitute the nature of *being*. Given this, it placed him in a very

---

110 Of course, there are arguments for a contradictory world in famous speculative thinkers such as Heraclitus, Hegel, and Marx; more recently, there are attempts to defend that the world is (in some sense) contradictory in association with Eastern religious beliefs. Deguchi, Garfield, and Priest [12, p.371] go on to say that "[i]t is important that samsāra and nirvāna are both distinct and identical at this world". So, by looking at the right places, one may find that claims of a contradictory world are not so rare (see also Priest and Routley [25] for further sources of contradictions in philosophical thought). (Arenhart, 2018, p. 13)

111 I am grateful to Graham Priest for directing me to some of these thinkers by having shared with me some of his work on this matter, namely, Metaphysics and Logic: an Observation in Metametaphysics (2018).

112 Thus, see A.V. Miller (trans.), *Hegel's Science of Logic*, Allen and Unwin, London 1969, p. 440, and A. V. Miller (trans.), *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature: Being Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1970, p. 43. For some discussion, see M.J. Inwood, Hegel, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1983, pp. 448 f.

113 See Priest, G. (2002). *Beyond the limits of thought*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

awkward position on the account of which one could not inquire what *being* actually was. Every time someone attempted to inquire about the *being* of so and so, it meant treating the very thing itself as a *being*. Thus, Heidegger adopted the view that *being* is and is not an object.

3.5 Dialetheism: True contradictions

The universal application of the law of non-contradiction to *all* instances such as the ones noted above would result in paradoxical scenarios[114]. On a practical front this would not only prove to be unfeasible but leave us with enigmatic situations. These instances of ontological contradictions, nevertheless, are arguably indicative of either metaphysical or semantic dialetheism. Prior to obtaining some idea of what metaphysical dialetheism is in contrast to semantic dialetheism, it is worth acknowledging, more generally, the definition of dialetheism. Priest, who is one of the prominent advocates of dialetheism provides the following definition, "Specifically, a *dialetheia* is a true contradiction, a pair, α and ¬α, which are both true (or equivalently, supposing a normal notion of conjunction, a truth of the form α ∧ ¬α). A *dialetheist* is therefore a person who holds that some contradictions are true" (Priest, 2007, p.131). To appreciate a dialetheist's position that *some* contradictions are true, consider a *trivialist*. A trivialist holds that *all* contradictions are true. Returning to metaphysical dialetheism, Mares (2004) provides a succinct distinction between metaphysical and semantic dialetheism in the following manner,

---

114 A paradox can be understood as an argument which appears to offer true premises on the grounds of correct reasoning that sequentially lead on to a false conclusion34. This is how Sainsbury understands a paradox,

> . . . an apparently unacceptable conclusion derived by apparently acceptable reasoning from apparently acceptable premises. Appearances have to deceive, since the acceptable cannot lead by acceptable steps to the unacceptable. So, generally, we have a choice: either the conclusion is not really unacceptable, or else the starting point, or the reasoning, has some non-obvious flaw. (Sainsbury, 2009, p. 1)

The metaphysical dialetheist holds that there are aspects of the world (or of some possible world) for which any accurate description will contain a true contradiction. Semantic dialetheism, on the other hand, maintains that it is always possible to redescribe this aspect of the world, using a different vocabulary (or perhaps vocabularies), consistently without sacrificing accuracy. (Mares, 2004, p. 270)

To illustrate sematic dialetheism Priest (2006) refers to over-defining a notion. It is this over-defining which gives rise to a dialetheia. To demonstrate this,

. . . suppose that we define the predicate 'x is an Adult' to be true of persons iff they are 16 or over, and to be false of persons iff they are 18 or under. Then, though the facts about people and their ages are consistent enough, a 17-year-old will be both an Adult and not an Adult. One might hold that all dialetheias arise because of (implicit) definitions of this kind. (Priest, 2006, p 300)

To illustrate metaphysical dialetheism Priest (2006) refers to negative facts, which in my opinion, is a thoroughgoing example of ontological contradictions[115]. Take the case of someone who subscribes to a traditional correspondence theory of truth. For them the truth of $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ would have to be one which corresponds to facts in an extra-linguistic reality. That is, the truth of $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ would have to (somehow) match up with matters of fact or states of affairs in a reality that cannot be adequately expressed with the aid of our linguistic capability. Accordingly, the way in which we would accept positive facts in making positive claims true – by virtue of a correspondence relation – we would equally have to accept negative facts in making negated

---

115 See Arenhart (2018) from pages 17 to 20.

claims true[116]. The unwillingness to concede negative facts, nevertheless, is somewhat evident[117]. The implication of accepting negative facts would not merely result in an overcrowded ontology but would do so in a way that amounts to being a trivialist. For every fact or state of affair to obtain in the world we would require a non-fact or a non-state of affair and vice versa. This would mean that the world is inconsistent.

Priest's (1999) position on this matter, as previously discussed, is that the observable world is consistent given that contradictory instances $(\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha)$ are not observable. Although this may, quite ironically, seem like upholding a conflicting view on the part of Priest, he clarifies his position by making the following subtle distinction,

> Whether the world is contradictory in any more profound sense is not such a straightforward matter. Indeed, beyond the sense I have given to it, it is not even clear what the claim means. It is not uncommon to hear it said, though, that reality itself is consistent; if there are dialetheias, these arise only because our language/ concepts engage with it in an inconsistent way. (Compare this with the view that there is no

---

116 That is, if f^+ is a possible fact, say one that would make α a true, there must be a corresponding one, f^-, that would make $\neg\alpha$ true. (Priest, 2006, p. 300)

117 Now many have felt a great reluctance to admit the existence of negative facts. For example, in his lectures on Logical Atomism, Russell, who did, in fact, accept the existence of negative facts at the time, writes:

> Are there negative facts? Are there such facts as you might call 'Socrates is not alive'? . . . One has a certain repugnance to negative facts, the same sort of feeling that makes you wish not to have a fact '*p* or *q*' going about the world. You have a feeling that there are only positive facts, and that negative propositions have somehow or other got to be expressions of positive facts.

What is this repugnance? One source of it is, I suspect, the obvious truth that everything that exists *is*. Add to this the thought that negative facts are *not*, and it follows that no such facts exist. This is a confusion, however, as old as Parmenides: negative facts are *not*, in the sense that they ground truths of the form 'it is not the case that so an so', but they *are* in exactly the same way that all existent things are, viz. they are part of reality. (Priest, 2006, p. 53)

vagueness in reality; vagueness arises only because of a certain indeterminacy in our language.) (Priest, 2006, p. 299)

3.6 Semantic and metaphysical dialetheism

It's rather evident from this that Priest is not a metaphysical dialetheist as Mares (2004) suspects. Whether this means he is a semantic dialetheist is also unclear – at least with respect to how Mares (2004) has characterized semantic dialetheism. Priest (2006) does not seem to provide a clear take on the matter. In fact, he presents himself to be neutral with regards to the distinction between semantic and metaphysical dialetheism[118]. I, on the other hand, am inclined to think that the distinction between semantic and metaphysical dialetheism, at least the way in which Mares (2004) has depicted it, ostensibly overlooks the underlying association of metaphysical realism between the two forms of dialetheism. Mares (2004) distinction between the two types of dialetheism appears to express them in a mutually exclusive manner.

To appreciate my point, suppose I subscribe to semantic dialetheism – which for most people may seemingly propose a less ludicrous outlook than its counterpart. On this account I would concede that there are no inconsistencies in things themselves. Instead, inconsistencies arise due to the problematic relationship between our language and the world. Moreover, we can redescribe such inconsistencies with the aid of differing vocabulary without having to risk abandoning accuracy. Now despite having an alternative vocabulary (such as metatheory[119]) at

---

118 Mares takes me to be a metaphysical dialetheist, 32 but In Contradiction is, in fact largely neutral on most of the relevant issues. (Priest, 2006, p. 302)

119 Paraconsistent logicians often, in fact usually, use a consistent metatheory to describe their logics. This feature of semantic dialetheism tells us that there will be a consistent metatheory to use and thus in part justifies our using one. (Mares, 2004, p. 270)

my disposal, I would consider my conception of reality as inherently consistent. This would be suggestive of a form of metaphysical realism in the sense that even with reality being mind-independent; I am able to epistemologically discern its consistency. Such consistency would not be discernable with the aid of language since that would result in circularity. Allow me to demonstrate this point.

Semantic dialetheism infers a primary inconsistency which arises due to the disparity between the use of my initial language (let this be L^1) and reality. This inconsistency can then be redescribed away with the use of an alternative vocabulary (let this be L^2). Although L^1 and L^2 are both employed to describe and subsequently redescribe the same reality respectively; the "semantic glue" which attaches the meaning of the vocabulary used in L^1 fails to stick in any accurate way. This is discernible on the grounds that it gives rise to an inconsistency. While the "sematic glue" which attaches the meaning of the vocabulary used in L^2 succeeds in sticking in an accurate way. This is discernible on the grounds that it gives rise to a consistency. This would mean that I take the consistency by which I go about discerning the accuracy of L^1 and L^2 as a given. If I did not and I happen to rely on employing L^2 in doing so, it would be circular. In this case semantic dialetheism would infer a primary inconsistency due to a disparity between my initial language (L^1) and the very reality which I am only able to discern is consistent by way of employing an alternative vocabulary (L^2).

Alternatively, suppose I subscribe to metaphysical dialetheism. On this account I would concede that there are things in the world that are actually inconsistent. Regardless of the kind of vocabulary I employ, the inconsistency in this case will remain, because it is inherent. This would also be suggestive of a form of metaphysical realism since in this case, despite reality being mind-independent, I am able to epistemologically discern its inherent inconsistency. The

way in which I can epistemologically discern the inconsistency of reality is not clear. Resorting to language is clearly not an option in this case. It may be that my conception of reality is once more taken as a given. Moreover, whether such inconsistencies of the world would be inclusive of our language would be an interesting question. If it is, it would manifest a profound interplay between the two types of dialetheism.

3.7 The metaphysical neutrality of logic

This brings us back to the issue of neutrality. The possibility of ontological paradoxes or rather possible instances of contradictions within reality would seem to suggest that the law of non-contradiction is not metaphysically neutral. This is because the law of non-contradiction (from a metaphysical perspective) deems ontological contradictory instances/states of affairs as necessarily false on the grounds already mentioned. Conversely, logic is supposed to be ontologically neutral[120]. It should operate independent of any metaphysical presuppositions. Logic ought not to make any substantive assertions concerning ontological questions such as what there is or whether there is anything at all. To obtain an idea of how an ontologically neutral logic should operate it is worth referring to the "locked room" metaphor as Varzi (2014) has alluded to in the following manner,

> This conception of logic may be illustrated with the help of the "locked room" metaphor. Logicians must pretend to be locked in a dark, windowless room, and to know nothing about the world outside. When confronted with a statement, they must

---

120 A natural metametaphysical hope is that logic should be able to act as a neutral arbiter of metaphysical disputes, at least as a framework on which all parties can agree for eliciting the consequences of the rival metaphysical theories. An obvious problem for this hope is the proliferation of alternative logics, many of them motivated by metaphysical considerations. (Williamson, 2014, p. 211)

try to evaluate it exclusively on the basis of their linguistic competence. If they can establish that it is true, then the statement is *logically consistent*. And if they can establish that the statement is true on the assumption that certain other statements are true, then the corresponding argument is *logically valid*. Logical truth and validity are based on how our language works, and on our ability to keep track of the fixed meaning of certain syncategorematic expressions such as connectives and quantifiers. They do not depend on what extralinguistic reality might look like. (Varzi, 2014, p. 53)

This metaphor provides us with a mental illustration of how logic should determine what follows from what independent of metaphysical presumptions. Moreover, it draws our attention to how fundamental the operations of language are in arriving at logical truth and validity. The prerequisite of language, nonetheless, is to function like a bridge between our thoughts and the structure of the world if it is to be meaningful. That is, if language is to represent our mental states and thoughts about the external world then it must bear some relational property to the structure and features of the world to which it linguistically refers – namely they should be referential expressions. This inevitably connects it with ontology. However, the locked room metaphor seems to suggest that logicians needn't "depend on what extralinguistic reality might look like" since it is sufficient in being able to arrive at logical truth and validity by whatever linguistic competence logicians may already possess. What seems to be overlooked here is, irrespective of the level of linguistic competence these logicians may possess, it would presuppose at least some form of ontological commitment on their behalf if they are to establish logical truth and validity. Moreover, the locked room metaphor suggests that logical truth and validity of statements is also based upon keeping track of fixed meanings of certain logical expressions, namely logical constants (such as connectives and quantifiers). This means to say that distinguishing the logical constants of a language (from its non-logical expressions) should

determine the logical truth and validity of a given statement. Yet, the meanings of such logical constants can be equally taken to represent ontological assumptions.

Accordingly, logic would be considered as a branch of knowledge which possesses a subject-matter of its own contrasted with being viewed as a mere practical instrument which adjudicates between all discourses. For logic to possess a subject-matter of its own would mean that it is like any other branch of genuine knowledge that is capable to make noteworthy theoretical contributions. Consequently, logic would not be topic-neutral in its approach. While if logic is considered to act as a mere practical instrument without any distinct subject-matter of its own then its application and approach to all other discourses would be topic-neutral. This understanding has been contested by Sher (2013, 2016). For Sher (2013, 2016) we needn't think that for logic to be topic-neutral it has to be devoid of its own subject-matter. Sher (2016) has argued that,

> Logic is indeed topic neutral, but being topic neutral is not the same thing as not having a subject matter of its own. Logic does have a subject matter of its own. Its subject matter is logical inference, logical truth, logical contradiction (inconsistency), logical equivalence, etc., where these are very different subject matters from those of physics, mathematics, or psychology. In spite of having a definite subject matter, however, logic is topic neutral. Its topic neutrality consists in the fact that it applies the same tests of logical validity, logical truth, etc., to inferences and sentences in all area of discourse, regardless of their subject matter. Logic, thus, is a theoretical discipline with its own subject matter, and one of its jobs is to provide theoretical knowledge about it. (Sher, 2016, p. 254)

For Sher (2016) logic is topic neutral despite having a subject matter of its own. From her perspective we needn't think of logic's topic-neutrality being mutually exclusive with it possessing a subject-matter of its own. The subject matter of logic, as Sher (2013) puts it, is very different from other disciplines in the sense that logic evaluates "special conditions under which an inference is logically valid, a sentence is logically consistent, a theory is logically consistent. It tells us whether specific inferences, sentences, and theories satisfy these conditions" (Sher, 2013, p. 159). Although this is a definite characterisation of the subject-matter of logic, the impartial application of these characterisations to all discourses does not appear to provide any justification for it to be topic neutral. Sher (2013) assumes that it does by implying that,

> In spite of having a definite subject-matter, logic is topic neutral. Its topic neutrality consists in the fact that it *applies* the same tests of logical validity, logical truth, etc., to inferences and sentences in *all* area of discourse, regardless of *their* subject matter. (Sher, 2013, p. 159)

Irrespective of how impartially pervasive the subject-matter of logic is in terms of universally being applicable to *all* areas of discourse, it does not provide any cogent reasons for why it should be considered neutral[121]. The fact that logic is applicable to "*all* area of discourse, regardless of *their* subject matter" is hardly a substantial reason to assume that the presupposed ideas by which it determines validity, truth, and consistency of all discourses, would be

---

121 C. *Topic Neutrality*. We have already explained why the topic neutrality of logic does not mean that logic does not have a topic of its own. Topic neutrality, in the sense applicable to logic, has to do with scope or range of applicability: logic is topic neutral iff it applies to all fields of knowledge equally, regardless of what *their* specific subject matter is. That logic satisfies this condition follows from its generality, which, as we have just seen, follows from its formality. More directly, since logical operators, being formal, do not distinguish between arguments belonging to different fields of knowledge, they apply to all fields, regardless of their "topic". (Sher, 2016, p. 291)

neutral[122]. In support of this Sher (2016) expresses a logical equivalence between the neutrality of logic (*p*) and its application to all areas of knowledge (*q*)[123]. According to Sher (2016) the universal application of logic to all areas of knowledge (*q*) is what satisfies the biconditional in this respect. However, I don't seem to think that is the case, since (*q*) does not necessarily implicate (*p*). There are two instances in the truth-functional treatment of "*p* iff *q*" in which the truth-value between both sentences does not correspond with one another. The instance which arguably is relevant to this specific matter is where (*p*) is true and (*q*) is false. As a result of this the biconditional is false.

The universal application of the law of non-contradiction is probably *the* most fundamental criterion by which we make sense of things. Of course, whether the law of non-contradiction acting within the purview of classical logic ought to be considered as a system which accurately maps out our rationality may certainly be up for dispute. Although, as Tahko (2009) puts it, "…it is not clear how we could model rationality without LNC, and more importantly, there does not seem to be much evidence of the effectiveness of reasoning that does not conform to

---

122 I suppose Sher's perspective on this matter is a corollary of her presumption that logic is grounded both in the world and in the mind.

> Having these theoretical and instrumental tasks to perform, logic must be subjected to high standards of truth and instrumental success. Epistemically, this means that logic is in need of a foundation, and in particular its claims to truth and success require a critical justification and substantive explanation. Here, however, we seem to be pulled in opposite directions. To the extent that logic's subject-matter is linguistic (conceptual, mental), logic requires a grounding in language, concepts, or more broadly the mind. But to the extent that logic has to work in the world and has to be factually true, it requires a grounding in the world (reality, fact). I.e., to the extent that logic is an instrument for expanding *knowledge of the world* and preventing incorrect depiction of the world by theory (theoretical error), and to the extent that it is charged with saying true things about its subject-matter, it requires a grounding in reality. In my view, the apparent conflict between the need to ground logic in the mind and the need to ground it in the world is just that: apparent. Logic, like all other branches of knowledge, requires a grounding both in the mind and in the world. (Sher, 2013, p. 159)

123 . . . logic is topic neutral iff it applies to all fields of knowledge equally, regardless of what *their* specific subject matter is. That logic satisfies this condition follows from its generality, which, as we have just seen, follows from its formality. (Sher, 2016, p. 291)

LNC" (Tahko, 2009, p. 36). Nevertheless, Sher's position on the application of logic to all areas of discourse would most certainly be inclusive of the law of non-contradiction – as it would equally be of the remaining two laws of logic. This would mean that the universal application of the law of non-contradiction would be a necessary and sufficient condition in allowing for it to be neutral. However, I have already mentioned how the law of non-contradiction dictates our metaphysics in proscribing us from accepting/asserting ontological contradictions. Moreover, I have also touched upon the existence of ontological contradictions and how this is indicative of dialetheism. Both perspectives seem to imply that the law of non-contradiction is not neutral. That is, the law of non-contradiction does not merely impose a genuine constraint on the way in which I conceive the structure of reality. It goes further in ontologically prohibiting me from accepting/asserting the existence of contradictory matters or state of affairs – barring me from accepting/asserting their truth – while such matters exist.

4. This metaphysical constraint blocks one from accepting an absolute ineffable God of Islam as being logically consistent

Considering what I have drawn on so far, the law(s) of logic – most notably the law of non-contradiction – enacts a constraint on our metaphysics. This implies that the law of non-contradiction is not metaphysically neutral. To appreciate this, suppose someone upheld a particular metaphysical belief that is unequivocally contradictory. Under such circumstances the belief cannot be true. It would be necessarily false. This is because the law of non-contradiction imposes a barring mechanism which precludes admitting a contradictory belief. We can derive at least two suppositions from this claim. These are ontological and epistemological suppositions that proscribe contradictory beliefs in virtue of the law of non-contradiction. These suppositions can be articulated collectively as: 'contradictions cannot exist, therefore believing that they do is false'.

4.1 An absolute ineffable God of Islam

I shall now demonstrate this in virtue of an absolute ineffable God of Islam. This would entail establishing that classical logic – more specifically the law of non-contradiction – blocks one from accepting the notion of an absolute ineffable God of Islam as being logically consistent. In establishing this claim, I shall explore how the theoretical dictates of the law of non-contradiction prove to be inconsistent in ontologically and epistemologically attempting to account for an absolute ineffable God of Islam. Investigating this matter should tie together much of what has been covered in the previous sections. Consequently, this examination shall reveal that the system of classical logic is inconsistent (not amenable) in making sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam. To proceed with this, I shall begin by providing a synopsis to a specific concept of God within the Islamic tradition, namely, an absolute ineffable God.

The view of an Islamic God that I shall work with is one that I borrow from the erudite and illustrious 12th century Islamic theologian *Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī* (d. 1111). As Watt (2014) notably points out, *al-Ghazālī* was a prime exponent of *Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī's* (d. 935)[124] theological views. From among *al-Ghazālī's* theological views regarding God, here is an excerpt that bears a significant relevance to the specific notion of God that I shall refer to:

> God does not inhere in anything, and nothing inheres in Him. He is exalted above being contained by space, and too holy to be bounded by time; on the contrary, He existed before He created time and space. He now has [the attributes] by which He was

---

124 Al-Ash'ari was born at Basrah. Regarding his date of birth there is difference of opinion. Ibn Khallikan, in his discussion of the life of al-Ash'ari, mentions that he was born in 260 or 270/873 or 883 and died at Baghdad in 330/941 or some time after that. According to Shibli Nu'mani and ibn `Asakir (the author of *Tabyin Kidhb al-Muftari,* on the life and teachings of al-Ash'ari), he was born in 270/873 and died in 330/941. He was buried between Karkh and Bab al-Basrah (the gate of Basrah). He was a descendant of abu Musa al-Ash'ari, one, of the famous Companions of the Prophet. (M.M. Sharif, 1963, p. 222-223)

[previously characterized], and is distinguished from His creatures by His attributes. There is not in His essence what is other than He, nor in what is other than He is there [anything of] His essence. He is exalted above change [of state] and movement. Originated things do not inhere [or subsist] in Him, and accidental [events] do not befall Him. Rather, He does not cease; through the qualities of His majesty He is beyond cessation, and through the attributes of His perfection He is independent of [or does not require] any further increase of perfection. (al-Ghazālī translated by Watt in Renard, 2014, p. 110)

The distinguishing feature which sits at the heart of *al-Ghazālī's* belief of God is that He is unknowable[125]. Although one may be able to detect subtle sentiments that are indicative of unknowability[126] from the excerpt above, I find that Burrell (1987) has expressed this in a more evident manner.

Given the fact that "God is a being necessarily existing of Himself (*al-mawjud al-wajib al-wujud bi-dhatihi*)" (*Maqsad* 47, M 342–43), it should be clear that this "peculiar divine property belongs only to God and only God knows it." Moreover "it is inconceivable that anyone know it save Him or one who is His like, since He has no like, no other knows it." On such an account, "only God knows God" (*ibid*.). So the

---

125 See Fadlou Shehadi's Ghazali's Unique Unknowable God (1964)

126 It is worth noting that the sort of unknowability that I am ascribing to the Islamic God is not the kind that is manifested in Ismāʿīlī theology. The feature which distinguishes my idea of unknowability from Ismāʿīlī theology is that I don't think anything is impossible for an absolute transcendent God while they assume it is. The distinction that I am drawing on can be better appreciated in the extract below:

From the beginning of their movement in the mid- third/ ninth century, Ismāʿīlī Shīʿites had developed a cosmology that was heavily influenced by a set of Neoplatonic ideas and that interpreted God's divine unity (*tawḥīd*) in a radical way. For Ismāʿīlī philosophers and theologians, *tawḥīd* meant that God is absolutely transcendent and cannot in any way be part of this world. He is beyond being and beyond knowability. God's absolute transcendence makes it impossible that He causes anything in His creation, since that would require some immanence on His part. (Griffel, 2017, p. 219)

resources of philosophy confirm God's uniqueness or *tawhid*: the utter distinction of the One from all else: "everything the exercise of which is possible," which does in fact exist from that One "according to the best ways of order and perfection" (*Maqsad* 47, M 342). (Burrell, 1987, p. 181)

Considering both excerpts, I shall assert that God transcends all human conceptions of time, space, categories, and our cognitive and linguistic capacities. God is therefore believed to be absolutely transcendent. As a result of such absolute transcendence, I shall infer that in the Islamic tradition[127], God is *absolutely* ineffable. The 'absolute ineffability' that I have in mind is a radical type which eludes all thought and articulation of God. In this sense God would be incomprehensible and inexpressible[128]. Let us term these as conceptual and semantic ineffability sequentially. By conceptual ineffability I mean logically inconceivable and by semantic ineffability I mean linguistically inexpressible. Combining these two types of ineffability would qualify it with an *absoluteness* that allows us to distinguish it from weaker forms of ineffability. Weaker forms of ineffability are types that would be inclined to making some form of concession. This would include granting an ability to either conceive or express a notion of God or both to avoid the paradoxical scenario it gives rise to[129].

---

127 It should be noted that I do not intend to speak for the whole of the Islamic tradition.

128 Despite this it should be noted that "Al-Ghazālī was convinced that God can be conceived and perceived by humans, albeit only after overcoming much difficulty by education or preparation such as "polishing of the heart."" (Griffel, 2009, p. 263)

129 See Hick (2000) The most notable reply to Alston's arguments comes from John Hick. As a part of his pluralist hypothesis, Hick maintains that the Real, which shows itself in religious or mystic experiences across cultures, is ineffable and can only be grasped in categories shaped by our respective cultures and traditions. So, if a Christian mystic experiences a personal God while Buddhists experience the non-personal state of nirvana, there is no actual contradiction, since the contradictory predicates only apply to the various personae of the Real, not to the Real itself. The Real itself is beyond the categories of human thought and is, therefore, ineffable; our predicates do not apply to it. Hick, being aware of the problems this claim implies, tries to avoid the paradox of ineffability by making a distinction between formal and substantial predicates. Formal predicates tell us nothing about what the Real is like in itself, substantial predicates do. If, e.g. I say about the Real that it is a possible object of

Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that I do not ascribe absolute ineffability to the Islamic God on the grounds that He is devoid of divine attributes or properties. I believe the Islamic God is absolutely ineffable in virtue of His essence and *all* His attributes. *Al-Ghazālī* has clearly affirmed the existence of God's attributes in the above excerpt. He insinuates that God's attributes are different (in-kind as opposed to in-degree) and unlimited as well as perfect. It would follow that God is absolutely ineffable on the grounds that His attributes are unfathomable, whereby we are unable to conceive and subsequently express them. More importantly, it would be incorrect to uphold the view that God is absolutely ineffable, exclusively on the grounds that He has no attributes which can be predicated to Him. In this case the non-existence of attributes would leave no room for them to be conceptually and semantically ineffable. Consequently, saying nothing about God would still, bizarrely, express all that there *is*, only because there is nothing. Thus, Kukla (2005) on this matter has expressed that such an understanding has nothing to do with ineffability.

This idea of an absolute ineffable God would be a contradictory one under the rubric of classical logic. Given that classical logic adheres to the laws of logic it would theoretically compel me by way of logical necessity to admit that a contradiction is necessarily *false,* and a tautology is necessarily *true*. If I attempt to resist this claim it would defy the laws of logic. Let me explain why. Take the claim 'God is ineffable' (which would be inclusive of the idea of an ineffable God). If God is ineffable, as the claim asserts, then He cannot be conceived of and nor spoken of. Any conception of God and articulation of this conception would render Him effable (describable). The claim, nonetheless, explicitly asserts that God is ineffable (indescribable). This claim is an articulation of a concept, an expression of a thought about an ineffable God. It means that the very claim itself, namely 'God is ineffable' would necessarily imply that He is

---

reference, then this is just a formal predicate, while saying that it is a person is a substantial predicate. (Gäb, 2017, p. 3)

effable. But if He is effable, then He is not ineffable. Consequently, the claim 'God is ineffable', though it anticipates expressing that God is indescribable by way of stating He is ineffable, does so at the cost of describing God. This is a self-defeating claim which manifests an evident contradiction[130].

This conceptual dilemma has led many theologians to resort to the apophatic tradition[131]. One of the obvious reasons as to why practitioners of the apophatic method (negative theology) have sought this alternative is to minimise violating the absolute ineffability of God. Restricting themselves to negative claims about what-God-is-*not* may help circumvent anthropomorphic attributions to an ineffable God. This approach might appear to be less prone to the kinds of anthropomorphic issues that arise with positive claims; however, they are not any different when it comes to matters of *absolute* ineffability. Saying what God-is-not would not be any different to saying what He is when it comes to matters of absolute ineffability. A negative claim would still be a propositional claim despite inferring what-is-not-the-case. Therefore,

---

130 Elsewhere I have referred to this as the paradox of ineffability. A paradox can be understood as an argument which appears to offer true premises on the grounds of correct reasoning that sequentially lead on to a false conclusion (See Olin (2003)). This is how Sainsbury understands a paradox,

> . . . an apparently unacceptable conclusion derived by apparently acceptable reasoning from apparently acceptable premises. Appearances have to deceive, since the acceptable cannot lead by acceptable steps to the unacceptable. So, generally, we have a choice: either the conclusion is not really unacceptable, or else the starting point, or the reasoning, has some non-obvious flaw. (Sainsbury, 2009, p. 1)

This understanding reflects in some way as to why I have chosen to express the claim 'God is ineffable' as a paradox. Primarily, it is due to its inherent conflicting nature. The claim attempts to communicate the indescribability of God at the cost of describing Him. Apparently this claim reveals something which, without deeper inspection, seems to say what God cannot be by using a negative prefix, namely, 'in-effable'. This may appear acceptable on the condition that it has been arrived at by apparently acceptable premises. However, what it eventually implies is unacceptable. The semantic implication of the term 'ineffability' infers a direct inconsistency with the claim that is used to communicate it. Therefore, we are left with a claim which fails to assert what it intends simply because it unavoidably does what it says cannot be done.

131 Al-Ghazālī rejected negative theologies—even among the Sunni groups—and he vigorously opposed such extreme ones. (Griffel, 2009, p. 263)

negative claims about an ineffable God would be no less different in resulting in a contradiction than positive claims, since they are both inferring something by way of predication.

The resulting contradiction that arises from the idea of an absolute ineffable God as well as the claim 'God is ineffable' undoubtedly does so given that the law of non-contradiction is unequivocally defied. The version of the law of non-contradiction which is defied is the metaphysical type (as previously specified). It can be formally expressed in the following way: $\forall x \, \forall F \, \neg \, (F \, (x) \wedge \neg \, F \, (x))$. This reads as follows: the same object cannot both have and not have the same property. Accordingly, in the case of the contradictory idea of an absolute ineffable God and more specifically the expression of this idea in virtue of the following claim 'God is ineffable' it would be expressed as $\forall x \, \forall F \, (F \, (x) \wedge \neg \, F \, (x))$. This would read as follows: the same object (God) both has *and* does not have the same property (being ineffable). This approach to a contradiction is not concerned with a single or a pair of statements or propositions. It rather focuses on states of affairs themselves as well as our ability to know them. It is the type of contradiction that seems to be a closer variant of what Aristotle proposed in his characterisation of a contradiction[132]. More specifically, it appears to relate to his concise version of the law of non-contradiction in which he stated "A thing cannot at the same time be and not be" (Met. 996b29-30).

4.2 Evaluating an absolute ineffable God in virtue of metaphysical logical realism

The metaphysical version of the law of non-contradiction specifically bears ontological and epistemological implications. Such implications are more apparently communicated in the

---

132 The same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect; we must presuppose, in the face of dialectical objections, any further qualifications which might be added. (Met. 1005b19-2)

metaphysical version of the law of non-contradiction than alternative ones[133]. In the case of an absolute ineffable God, these ontological and epistemological implications would respectively manifest the following kinds of consequences. The ontological implication would deny the ontological status of the property of absolute ineffability that both exists and does not exist at any one time. While the epistemological implication would assent to our ability in *knowing* that 'the property of absolute ineffability that both exists and do not exist at any one time' cannot exist. Both corollaries would fail to capture the *true* reality of an *absolute* ineffable God, since any attempt in doing so would compromise God's conceptual and semantic ineffability.

Allow me to elucidate this point further with the aid of metaphysical logical realism. Together, these implications are suggestive of metaphysical logical realism. Although they may not be specific to the law of non-contradiction, they have a foundational role in classical logic (of which the law of non-contradiction is a defining feature). McSweeney (2018) has characterised metaphysical logical realism as a view that substantiates the one true logic. The one true logic, as McSweeney (2018) puts it, is either a single or small plurality of logics that is objective. Metaphysical logical realism in this sense adopts the one true logic that is objectively correct in either, directly corresponding to, or being located in, a mind-and-language-independent reality[134]. More specifically McSweeney (2018) adopts metaphysical logical realism to be the conjunction of the following claims:

---

133 There are a few ways in which a contradiction has been characterised. Grim (2004) has accumulated and assorted nineteen of these characterisations into four overarching types. These include pragmatic, metaphysical, semantic, and syntactic types.

134 Although McSweeney's (2018) characterisation of metaphysical logical realism expresses a satisfactory account from an ontological perspective, it does not appear to pay much attention to the epistemological perspective. Being in a position where a metaphysical logical realist *knows* that a one true logic that is objectively correct to either directly correspond or be located in a mind-and-language-independent reality, cannot be disregarded regardless of how intuitive it may seem.

a) There is OTR [one true logic].

b) What makes the OTR true is the mind-and-language-independent world.

c) The OTL is *metaphysically privileged*: better than any other logic at capturing the nature of reality.

(McSweeney, 2018, p. 2)

If metaphysical logical realism, as characterised by McSweeney (2018), is true (as metaphysical logical realism supposes it is), then it would mean that

> …it may conflict with various assumptions that are often made about logic; e.g. that logic is topic neutral (or, relatedly, that it is perfectly general); that it is ontologically neutral (it doesn't commit us to any particular ontology); that inquiry into logic is special and distinct from other kind of theoretical inquiry; that logic is not *revisable*; and that logic is wholly *a priori*, whereas other kinds of inquiry are not. All of these assumptions might be motivated by thinking that logic has nothing to do with the world. (McSweeney, 2018, p. 1)

McSweeney (2018) goes on to clarify that anyone who subscribes to this type of metaphysical logical realism, its logic would not be ontologically neutral. Our logical commitments, in this case, would be ones that either *are* our ontological commitments, or ones that are shaped by our ontological commitments. Logic would then be grounded in the world whereby it reflects the structure of the world. Given this, logic would prove to be a devise with the aid of which we can accurately apprehend and represent the structure of a mind-and-language-independent reality. This would grant the logic in question an aptitude in being able to quantify and express a mind-and-language-independent reality. However, an absolute ineffable God cannot be stipulated to occupy, or be homogenous with, such a reality. If God is thought to either, occupy

or be homogenous with, such a reality then it would imply that He falls under the rubric of being quantified by the logic in question. Moreover, it would infer that God bears the same kind of qualitative existence much like everything else that can be captured and expressed by this logic. This would make God's existence qualitatively homogenous with His creation, which would impede on His absolute transcendence.

4.3 Ontological and ideological logical realism

To pursue this matter further it is worth considering the two types of metaphysical logical realists which McSweeney (2018) introduces. These are ontological (metaphysical) logical realists and ideological (metaphysical) logical realists. The former of these is the view that "the one true logic is true in virtue of directly reflecting something about items in our ontology" (McSweeney, 2018, p. 4). The latter of these is the view that "the one true logic is the one true logic in virtue of being a part of the language (ideology) that best captures the structure of reality" (McSweeney, 2018, p. 4).

In line with our inquiry, let us view the law of non-contradiction through the lens of each of these types of metaphysical logical realism and determine why both would fail in capturing the true reality of an absolute ineffable God. The ontological (metaphysical) logical realists would consider the law of non-contradiction as being *true* given its accurate reflection of things in our ontology. This would mean that the structure of our ontology cannot be the kind which bears any contradictions since that would be a clear violation of the law of non-contradiction. This brings us back to the discussion on the ontological status of contradictions, namely, whether we can determine their existence in reality or not. As I previously mentioned on this issue, although we are not in an epistemological position to verify the existence of contradictions, it does not imply that we ought to rule out their existence. Nevertheless, if one upheld the notion

of an absolute ineffable God, while subscribing to the law of non-contradiction in virtue of ontological (metaphysical) logical realism, it would result in a distorted reflection of reality. This is because, it would harbour an explicit contradiction. This view would block one from subscribing to any such reality. Since the reality in question would be a contradictory one, it would be false. With regards to an absolute ineffable God, this would be a violation of His conceptual ineffability.

To circumvent this issue, we would have to oppose this type of ontological (metaphysical) realism with an absolute ineffable God in mind. This would mean rejecting the three constituting claims of the one true logic proposed by McSweeney (2018). In other words, given that this type of metaphysical logical realism is a view which substantiates the one true logic, its negation would be a negation of the one true logic. The negation of the three constituting claims of the one true logic would, in this case, be *ontological*.

a) There is OTR [one true logic].

b) What makes the OTR true is the mind-and-language-independent world.

c) The OTL is *metaphysically privileged*: better than any other logic at capturing the nature of reality.

The negation of the first claim in this sense would entail that there is *no* one true logic. This would mean that there is no single or small plurality of logics that is objective. By eliminating the objectivity of a single or small plurality of logics, it would be disassociating them from either, a direct correspondence with, or being located in, a mind-and-language-independent reality. The negation of the second claim would entail that there is no mind-and-language-independent reality which makes the one true logic *true*. This would not only entail the non-existence of a mind-and-language-independent reality but would further infer the non-truth of

a one true logic. The negation of the final claim would entail that the one true logic is not metaphysically privileged in the sense of adequately capturing the nature of reality. The negation of each of the three claims from an ontological perspective would in essence be a negation of their very existence.

The ideological (metaphysical) logical realists would consider the law of non-contradiction as not bearing out directly upon reality, but via the medium of our language. Our language (ideology) in this case would best capture the structure of reality, if it is in line with the law of non-contradiction. The semantic makeup of our language would thus have to conform to the law of non-contradiction as that would subsequently allow it to accurately capture the structure of reality. Reflecting on the claim 'God is (absolutely) ineffable' while considering the law of non-contradiction in virtue of ideological (metaphysical) logical realism would mean that the claim is a non-starter. This is because the *claim* 'God is ineffable' consists of an intrinsic contradiction that would fail to bear out on reality. Consequently, this would not allow language to accurately capture the structure of reality. This view would not only block one from subscribing to (the truth of) any such claim but infer that our linguistic capacity is accurate enough to arrive at this conclusion. With regards to an absolute ineffable God this would be a violation of His semantic ineffability.

To circumvent this issue, we would have to oppose this type of ideological (metaphysical) realism with an absolute ineffable God in mind. This would mean rejecting the three constituting claims of the one true logic proposed by McSweeney (2018). Once more, since this type of metaphysical logical realism is a view which substantiates the one true logic, its negation would be a negation of the one true logic. The negation of the three constituting claims of the one true logic would, in this case, be *ideological*.

  a) There is OTR [one true logic].

b) What makes the OTR true is the mind-and-language-independent world.

c) The OTL is *metaphysically privileged*: better than any other logic at capturing the nature of reality.

The negation of the first claim in this sense would primarily be a negation of the one true logic in virtue of being part of the language that is able to capture the structure of reality. This would mean that the one true logic is not constituted of the sort of language which is adequately able to capture the structure of reality. The negation of the second claim would be a negation of the language which captures the structure of mind-and-language-independent reality. Negating the language which captures the mind-and-language-independent reality would thus mean negating the truth of the one true logic. The negation of the final claim is the negation of the language with which we can determine the metaphysical privilege of the one true logic. This would entail that the language which is part of the make-up of the one true logic does not adequately capture the structure of reality which attempts to determine its metaphysical privilege. The negation of these three claims from an ideological perspective would, in essence, be a negation of the one true logic in virtue of the language which best captures the structure of reality.

Thus, both types of metaphysical logical realism, namely, ontological (metaphysical) logical realism and ideological (metaphysical) logical realism prove to be problematic in different ways when attempting to capture the true reality of an absolute ineffable God. An underlying consequence of this problematic approach would be the rejection of the three constituting claims of the one true logic which McSweeney (2018) has proposed. If the one true logic cannot be upheld as a logic which amounts to a form of objectivity in virtue of directly corresponding to, or being located in, a mind-and-language-independent reality in apprehending the *true* reality of an *absolute* ineffable God, then metaphysical logical realism would prove to be an

inadequate notion in this respect. The inadequacy of metaphysical logical realism in quantifying and expressing an absolute ineffable God would not inevitably legitimise the use of alternative logics. More pertinently, the inadequacy of ontological (metaphysical) realism and ideological (metaphysical) realism would not contribute in substantiating the existence of contradictions and the unconformity between our language and the law of non-contradiction which allows it to capture the structure of reality accurately (respectfully).

Resorting to a dialetheist logic (Logic of Paradox) in this respect would not prove helpful either. As I previously demonstrated, both types of dialetheism, namely semantic and metaphysical, bear an underlying association with metaphysical realism. Sematic dialetheism infers an epistemological ability in being able to discern that reality is consistent while metaphysical dialetheism infers the same ability in discerning that reality is inconsistent. Taking reality to be mind-and-language-independent while possessing the epistemological ability in discerning that reality, irrespective of whether it is considered as consistent or inconsistent, is clearly suggestive of an underlying metaphysical realism. Thus, despite having the liberty to accept some contradictions as being true in virtue of dialetheism, the epistemological ability in knowing their truth is what is problematic when it comes to the contradictory notion of an absolute ineffable God. This would imply that the nature of truth in virtue of which we are able make this discernment about an absolute ineffable God is either substantive or deflationary. Both prove problematic in the case of an absolute ineffable God.

4.4 Evaluating an absolute ineffable God in virtue of Metaphysical foundationalism

An alternative way to appreciate the inadequacy of metaphysical logical realism is in virtue of metaphysical foundationalism. Metaphysical foundationalism, in its crudest sense, is the thesis that the "overarching structure of reality is one according to which that reality is hierarchically

structured (the hierarchy thesis), well-founded (the fundamentality thesis), populated by merely contingent fundamentalia (the contingency thesis), and consistent (the consistency thesis)" (Bliss and Priest, 2018, p. 1)[135]. I believe that viewing metaphysical logical realism through the lens of metaphysical foundationalism shall offer a profound insight as to why it ultimately blocks one from accepting an absolute ineffable God of Islam as being logically consistent. In fact, viewing the former through the lens of the latter is not merely to obtain a deeper understanding of the matter in question. Instead, I think the former is indicative (at least in some loose sense) of the latter. Allow me to demonstrate this.

McSweeney (2018) says that " . . . what makes the OTL [one true logic] true: metaphysical logical realism, hereafter 'MLR'. This view takes the OTL to either directly correspond to the structure of mind-and-language-independent reality or to be located in mind-and-language-independent reality" (McSweeney, 2018, p. 1). Let us bear both components in mind that are responsible for making the one true logic *true*. When the one true logic either directly corresponds to the structure of mind-and-language-independent reality or is located in mind-and-language-independent reality, it is objectively true. Both components, I believe, are

---

135 . . . there are, in fact, a variety of ways in which one can be a metaphysical foundationalist; with different species of foundationalism involving different core commitments. Although this list is by no means exhaustive, we assume the following to be amongst the core commitments of metaphysical foundationalism *as commonly endorsed in the contemporary literature*.

1. The hierarchy thesis: Reality is hierarchically structured by metaphysical dependence relations that are anti-symmetric, transitive, and anti-reflexive.

2. The fundamentality thesis: There is some thing(s) which is fundamental.

3. The contingency thesis: Whatever is fundamental is merely contingently existent.

4. The consistency thesis: The dependence structure has consistent structural properties.

Strictly speaking, in order to be considered a species of foundationalism, a view needs only commit to the the fundamentality thesis: 2., then, is both necessary and sufficient for a view to count as a kind of foundationalism. For proponents of what we can think of as the *standard view*, however, all four theses are necessary, with no one of them being sufficient. (Bliss and Priest, 2018, p. 2-3)

indicative (at least in some loose respect) of metaphysical foundationalism. Now consider metaphysical foundationalism. Let us take metaphysical foundationalism (in the broadest sense) to mean that the world has an overarching metaphysical structure[136]. "Of course, causal structure is a kind of metaphysical structure; however, what philosophers tend to mean nowadays when they speak of metaphysical structure is that this structure is induced by relations of ground and/or ontological dependence" (Bliss and Priest, 2018, p. 4). The distinction between ground and ontological dependence is as follows:

> Relations of ground, say many, obtain between facts, where relations of ontological dependence obtain between entities of any and all categories. So, where one would say that the fact that the weather is miserable today is grounded in the fact that it is pouring, one would say that the shadow ontologically depends on the object that casts it. And where one would say that the fact that the sky is blue or we are in Australia, is grounded in the fact that the sky is blue, one would also say that the fact that the sky is blue ontologically depends on its constituents—the sky and blueness. When we talk about relations of metaphysical dependence, we mean this term to act as a covering term for both grounding and ontological dependence. (Bliss and Priest, 2018, p. 4-5)

Given this, the two components which make the one true logic *true*, namely, a direct correspondence to the structure of mind-and-language-independent reality and to be located in mind-and-language-independent reality, seem to presuppose ground and ontological dependence respectively. This means, a direct correspondence to the structure of mind-and-language-independent reality would be suggestive of ground dependence. While to be located in mind-and-language-independent reality would be suggestive of ontological dependence. Let

---

136 Of course, causal structure is a kind of metaphysical structure; however, what philosophers tend to mean nowadays when they speak of metaphysical structure is that this structure is induced by relations of ground and/or ontological dependence. (Bliss and Priest, 2018, p. 4)

me unpack this connection. If the one true logic is taken to be *true* in virtue of 'a direct correspondence to the structure of mind-and-language-independent reality' then it would require some form of relational property of correspondence between it and it's mapping of that reality. This means that the constructive mapping of reality by the one true logic should bear a direct correspondence with a mind-and-language-independent reality if it is to be considered as true. The truth of the matter would thus be grounded in a correspondence relation that obtains between the one true logic's mapping, which in essence is a logical representation of mind-and-language-independent reality, and the state of affair within that reality (which it anticipates to represent). To demonstrate this, if a logical representation of a statement like the one given in the example above, namely, 'the weather is miserable today' is to be a fact (and thus, true), then it must be 'grounded in the fact that it is pouring' which is the occurrence of a particular state of affair within that reality. Consequently, for the one true logic to be true in virtue of a direct correspondence to the structure of mind-and-language-independent reality it would require ground dependence – the kind which obtains between facts (and states of affairs).

If on the other hand, the one true logic is taken to be *true* in virtue of being 'located in mind-and-language-independent reality' then it would be ontologically dependent upon that reality. Accordingly, for the one true logic to be *true* its constituents would have to be located in mind-and-language-independent reality. That is to say that the truth of the matter would be grounded in the one true logic's constructive mapping of a mind-and-language-independent reality being located in that very reality. As a result of this, the one true logic would not require some form of relational property of correspondence between it and it's mapping of that reality; simply because its mapping would be ontologically situated within that very reality. To demonstrate this, if a logical representation of a statement like the one given in the example above, namely, 'the sky is blue' is to be a fact (and thus, true), then it must ontologically depend on its constituents – 'the sky and blueness'. Consequently, for the one true logic to be true in virtue

of being located in mind-and-language-independent reality it would require ontological dependence – the kind which obtains between entities of any or all categories.

Considering the above connection, it can be concluded that both components of the one true logic (a direct correspondence to the structure of mind-and-language-independent reality and to be located in mind-and-language-independent reality) presuppose both components of metaphysical foundationalism (ground and ontological dependence respectively). The connection between the components of both, the one true logic and metaphysical foundationalism that has been established above is as follows: a direct correspondence to the structure of mind-and-language-independent reality would be suggestive of ground dependence. While to be located in mind-and-language-independent reality would be suggestive of ontological dependence. Metaphysical foundationalism can thus be perceived of as the underlying structure upon which the *truth* of the one true logic is determined. This would imply that metaphysical foundationalism *metaphysically* influences the one true logic. More specifically it influences the law of non-contradiction (since it's a defining axiom of classical logic in general), in blocking an absolute ineffable God from being logically consistent.

To appreciate how both components of metaphysical foundationalism blocks one from accepting the logical truth of an absolute ineffable God of Islam, we need to examine the *truth* of the law of non-contradiction in virtue of both these components. As I have previously demonstrated, the law of non-contradiction within the purview of classical logic enacts a constraint on our metaphysics. This metaphysical constraint theoretically precludes the belief in the existence of contradictions such as an absolute ineffable God. It does so by deeming all contradictions necessarily false. From the perspective of classical logic, it means that the law of non-contradiction is not only a necessary truth, but has a significant metaphysical bearing on the way we ought to logically adjudicate between believable and unbelievable matters.

Given this, the *truth* of the law of non-contradiction requires to be examined. It needs to be determined as to whether the truth of the law of non-contradiction obtains in ground dependence or ontological dependence when attempting to quantify and express an absolute ineffable God. To achieve this, I shall first explain what it means to consider the truth of the law of non-contradiction in virtue of both ground and ontological dependence. Subsequently, I shall explain why an absolute ineffable God is not amenable with both ground and ontological dependence. Both explanations shall collectively establish the following: if an absolute ineffable God is inconsistent with both constituting features of metaphysical foundationalism, namely, ground and ontological dependence, then it cannot be considered as the metaphysical arbiter which determines the logical truth of the law of non-contradiction regarding the same matter.

If the metaphysical version of the law of non-contradiction is considered to be true in virtue of ground dependence, then it means that its truth is grounded in a relation that obtains between two facts. These two facts are the law of non-contradiction's quantificational mapping of reality and the actual states of affairs within that reality (which the law of non-contradiction represents). If the relation between these two facts obtains then, according to ground dependence, the law of non-contradiction is true. If on the other hand, the metaphysical version of the law of non-contradiction is considered to be true in virtue of ontological dependence then it means that its truth is grounded in ontological entities and categories. If the ontological entities and categories that constitute this reality are not ones which exhibit contradictions – namely they are consistent – then the truth of the law of non-contradiction obtains.

Now if I happen believe in an absolute ineffable God, then such a God is not amenable with ground dependence and nor ontological dependence. Essentially an absolute ineffable God cannot be amenable with both ground and ontological dependence since it would mean His

existence (or even the truth of His existence) is inhibited by an overarching metaphysical structure. It would constrain God to the kind of metaphysical structure that is induced by relations of ground or ontological dependence. More specifically, if an absolute ineffable God was amenable with ground dependence which happens to obtain in some way; it would mean that there is a relation between matters of facts that are directly about an absolute ineffable God. The obtaining of such a relation would be what causes such mattes to be a fact. Moreover, from the perspective of a mind-and-language-independent reality such matters of fact would be of the kind that we could know and express. This would impinge on the conceptual and semantic ineffability of an absolute God since it would subjugate Him in becoming conceivable and expressible within an underlying metaphysical structure. Alternatively, if an absolute ineffable God was amenable with ontological dependence which also happens to obtain in some way; it would mean that God is ontologically dependent upon His constituents. The obtaining of such dependence would be what causes it to be a fact. Again, from the perspective of a mind-and-language-independent reality such matters of fact would be knowable and expressible. Thus, much like ground dependence, ontological dependence would also impinge on the conceptual and semantic ineffability of an absolute God since it would infer that God is ontologically dependent upon His own constituents within an underlying metaphysical structure which we can know and express.

For the reasons provided above, an absolute ineffable God is not amenable with both ground and ontological dependence. Resultantly, the truth of the law of non-contradiction cannot obtain in virtue of ground or ontological dependence when attempting to quantify and express an absolute ineffable God. Alternatively put, the underlying inconsistency between an absolute ineffable God and both ground and ontological dependence cannot then determine the *truth* of the law of non-contradiction when it deems contradictions such as an absolute ineffable God as necessarily false. Deeming the law of non-contradiction as true in virtue of either ground or

ontological dependence under such circumstances would make little sense. This is because the underlying metaphysical structure which determines its truth pertaining to the matter of an absolute ineffable God is itself inconsistent with the God in question.

An interesting corollary that stems from this is that in the case of both ground and ontological dependence, which are components of metaphysical foundationalism, the law of non-contradiction would be constrained. This would imply that there is a metaphysics more fundamental than logic. While for the most part of this section I have been arguing that the law of non-contradiction (within the purview of classical) constrains our metaphysics. This ostensibly implies that there is a logic that is more fundamental than metaphysics. A point of clarification that requires to be made at this juncture is that the constraint enacted on our metaphysics by law of non-contradiction is in actual fact referring to a metaphysics that accepts the contradictory notion of an absolute ineffable God. In other words, classical logic which is founded upon a realist (naturalist) metaphysics constrains by way of precluding a metaphysics which accommodates a contradictory notion of an absolute ineffable God. This establishes that much of what I have presented suggests that a metaphysics is more fundamental than logic.

However, this is not to dismiss the profound relationship which intimately entwines both metaphysics and logic at a foundational level. I do not hope to entertain this matter here. Nonetheless, there is little doubt that giving precedence and cogency to any one of these over the other can be manifested is various ways[137]. Both perspectives, as Priest puts it, can be turned on their head along with attempting to find 'a dialectical rapprochement between the two'[138].

---

137 See footnote 44.

138 See footnote 44.

Moreover, seeking to draw conclusive demarcations between which one of the two deserves to be prioritised over the other is no simple task since both are intimately entangled[139].

5. Therefore, classical logic is inconsistent (not amenable) in making sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam

This, rather neatly, brings us back to the opening section of this paper. I presented how engaging in a specific kind of metaphysics which determines our ontological commitments has been espoused by classical logic. I demonstrated how espousing this newer (naturalist) metaphysics has functionally departed classical logic from its predecessor, namely, Aristotelian logic. Moreover, I spoke of how classical logic has replaced Aristotelian logic with the use of certain linguistic devices such as quantifiers and bound variables. Such devises grant it further expressive power and allow it to map a reality in the way it has assumed that reality. It is therefore evident that the rise of classical logic and its intellectual prosperity is founded on a metaphysics that proves to be fundamental. The metaphysics which classical logic is founded upon is a realist one (in the broadest sense of realism) which cannot accommodate contradictions. This implies that the functionality of classical logic also cannot accommodate contradictions, since it presupposes a *consistent* metaphysics. A direct consequent of this is that classical logic is not metaphysically neutral. Classical logic's bearing upon a metaphysics such as this one would unavoidably shape the way in which it maps reality, i.e., consistently. More specifically, one of the defining features of classical logic, namely, the law of non-

---

139 But logic is not only a theory of reasoning. It is also, and to a great extent, a theory of language. At least as a matter of practice, a logical theory includes also an account of the meaning structures that underlie our ordinary discourse, for it is only relative to such structures that a rigorous theory of reasoning can be formulated. After all, insofar as logically valid reasoning must be truth-preserving, logic must tell us something about truth. It mustn't tell us *which* sentences are true; but it must tell us *what it takes* for a sentence to be true. It mustn't tell us what are the truth-makers of a sentence; but it must tell us what the truth-makers of a sentence must be like. And as such logic has a lot to do with metaphysics. (Varzi, 2009, p. 3)

contradiction, asserts that matters or states of affairs within this reality *cannot* be inconsistent. If a certain matter or state of affair within this reality happens to be represented as contradictory, then it must be necessarily false. Accordingly, this system of logic would prevent one from accepting a particular contradictory belief such as an absolute ineffable God as being true. The underlying metaphysis of classical logic would preclude one from accepting an absolute ineffable God of Islam[140] as being logically consistent.

The overall debate can thus be narrowed down to two conflicting, yet underlying metaphysics. On the one hand, we have a realist metaphysics (or any metaphysics for that matter) which cannot accommodate contradictions such as an absolute ineffable God. On the other hand, we have a dialetheist metaphysics which can accommodate contradictions. Although as I previously demonstrated, versions of dialetheism are not exactly free from an underlying association with metaphysical realism. Nonetheless, given that classical logic is founded upon the former of these metaphysics, it evidently proves inconsistent with an absolute ineffable God of Islam. This means it fails in being able to determine syntactical consistency regarding an absolute ineffable God. Failure in obtaining syntactical consistency would imply a lack of cognitive satisfaction – the kind with which we make sense of things. Sequentially, classical logic would thus prove inconsistent (not amenable) in making sense of an absolute ineffable God of Islam. This begs the questions as to whether adopting a metaphysics which accommodates contradictions – such as dialetheist metaphysics – proves sufficient in being able to *make sense* of an absolute ineffable God? Since versions of dialetheism are not exactly

---

140 I have demonstrated this in the following paper: Ahsan, A. (2019) Quine's Ontology and the Islamic Tradition. *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 36(2), pp.20-63.

independent of metaphysical realism the possibility in making sense does not appear any more promising.

References

al-Ghazālī, A. (2014). Ghazālī's Ashʿarī Creed Translated by W. Montgomery Watt. In: J. Renard, ed., *Islamic Theological Themes A Primary Source Reader*. University of California Press: California, pp.109-113.

Ardeshir, M. (2008). Ibn Sīnā's Philosophy of Mathematics. In: S. Rahman, T. Street and H. Tahiri, ed., *The Unity of Science in the Arabic Tradition Science, Logic, Epistemology and their Interactions*. Springer, pp.43-62.

Arenhart, J. (2018). The Price of True Contradictions About the World. In: W. Carnielli and J. Malinowski, ed., *Contradictions, from Consistency to Inconsistency*. Switzerland: Springer Nature, pp.11-32.

Armour-Garb, B. (2004). Diagnosing Dialetheism. In: G. Priest, J. Beall and B. Armour-Garb, ed., *The Law of Non-Contradiction New Philosophical Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.113-125.

Barrio, E., Pailos, F. and Szmuc, D. (2018). What is a Paraconsistent Logic?. In: W. Carnielli and J. Malinowski, ed., *Contradictions, from Consistency to Inconsistency*. Switzerland: Springer Nature.

Beall, J. (2000). Is the observable world consistent?. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 78(1), pp.113-118.

Beall, J. (2004). At the Intersection of Truth and Falsity. In: G. Priest, J. Beall and B. Armour-Garb, ed., *The Law of Non-Contradiction New Philosophical Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.1-22.

Beall, J. and Colyvan, M. (2001). Looking for Contradictions. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 79(4), pp.564-569.

Beall, J. and Logan, S. (2017). *Logic the basics*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

Beaney, M. (1996). *Frege Making Sense*. London: Duckworth.

Beaney, M. (2012). Logic and Metaphysics in Early Analytic Philosophy. In: L. Haaparanta and H. Koskinen, ed., *Categories of Being Essays on Metaphysics and Logic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.257-292.

Beaney, M. (2015). What is Analytic Philosophy?. In: M. Beaney, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of The History of Analytic Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.3-29.

Berto, F. (2007). *How to sell a contradiction*. London: College Publications.

Bliss, R. and Priest, G. ed., (2018). *Reality and its Structure Essays in Fundamentality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Carnielli, W. and Coniglio, M. (2016). *Paraconsistent Logic: Consistency, Contradiction and Negation*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Davidson, D. (2004). *Problems of rationality*. Oxford: Clarendon.

El-Rouayheb, K. (2010). *Relational syllogisms and the history of Arabic logic, 900-1900*. Leiden: Brill.

El-Rouayheb, K. (2016). Arabic Logic after Avicenna. In: C. Dutilh Novaes and S. Read, ed., *The Cambridge companion to medieval logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.67-93.

El-Rouayheb, K. (2019). Theology and Logic. In: S. Schmidtke, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.408-431.

El-Rouayheb, K. (2019). *The Development of Arabic Logic (1200-1800)*. Basel: Schwabe Verlag Basel.

Feldman, F. (1970). Leibniz and "Leibniz' Law." *The Philosophical Review*, 79(4), pp.510-522.

Fisher, J. (2008). *On the philosophy of logic*. Australia: Thomson/Wadsworth.

Gäb, S. (2017). The paradox of ineffability. *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 78(3), pp.289-300.

Griffel, F. (2009). *Al-Ghazālī's philosophical theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grim, P. (2004). What is a Contradiction?. In: G. Priest, J. Beall and B. Armour-Garb, ed., *The Law of Non-Contradiction New Philosophical Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.49-72.

Haack, S. (1993). *Philosophy of logics*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.

Hanna, R. (2006). *Rationality and logic*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT.

Hick, J. (2000). Ineffability. *Religious Studies*, 36(1), pp.35-46.

Jacquette, D. (2010). *Logic and how it gets that way*. Durham: Acumen Publishing Limited.

Kukla, A. (2010). *Ineffability and philosophy*. London: Routledge.

Locke, J. (2015). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Wordsworth Editions Ltd.

Mares, E. (2004). Semantic Dialetheism. In: G. Priest, J. Beall and B. Armour-Garb, ed., *The Law of Non-Contradiction New Philosophical Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.264-275.

McSweeney, M. (2018). Logical Realism and the Metaphysics of Logic. *Philosophy Compass*, 14(1), p.e12563.

Millar, A. and Bermudez, J. ed., (2002). *Reason and Nature Essays in the Theory of Rationality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Moore, A. (2012). *The evolution of modern metaphysics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Moore, A. W. (2017). Sense-making From a Human Point of View. In: G. D'oro and S. Overgaard, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Philosophical Methodology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.44-55.

Priest, G. (1999). Perceiving contradictions. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 77(4), pp.439-446.

Priest, G. (2002). *Beyond the limits of thought*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Priest, G. (2004). What's So Bad About Contradictions?. In: G. Priest, J. Beall and B. Armour-Garb, ed., *The Law of Non-Contradiction New Philosophical Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.23-38.

Priest, G. (2006). *Doubt truth to be a liar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Priest, G. (2006). *In Contradiction A Study of the Transconsistent*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Priest, G. (2007). Paraconsistency and dialtheism. In: D. Gabbay and J. Woods, ed., *Handbook of the History of Logic Volume 8 The Many Valued and Nonmonotonic Turn in Logic*. Amsterdam: Elsevier B.V., pp.129-204.

Putnam, H. (1994). Sense, Nonsense, and the Senses: An Inquiry into the Powers of the Human Mind. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 91(9), p.445.

Rea, M. (2011). Introduction. In: M. Rea and O. Crisp, ed., *Analytic Theology New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.1-30.

Renard, J. ed., (2014). *Islamic Theological Themes a primary source reader*. Oakland: University of California Press, pp.109-116.

Rescher, N. (2017). Philosophy as Rational Systematization. In: G. D'oro and S. Overgaard, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Philosophical Methodology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.32-43.

Rumfitt, I. (2010). Logical Necessity. In: B. Hale and A. Hoffmann, ed., *Modality Metaphysics, Logic, and Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.35-64.

Rumfitt, I. (2015). *Boundary stones of thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Russell, B. (2008). *The Problems of Philosophy*. Rockville: Arc Manor.

Sainsbury, R. (2009). *Paradoxes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sharif, M. M. (ed.) (1963). *A History of Muslim Philosophy: With Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and the Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands*. Royal Book Co.

Sher, G. (2010). Is logic in the mind or in the world?. *Synthese*, 181(2), pp.353-365.

Sher, G. (2013). The foundational problem of logic. *The Bulletin of Symbolic Logic*, 19(2), pp.145-198.

Sher, G. (2016). *Epistemic friction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sider, T. (2011). *Writing the book of the world*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Šiḥāda, F. (1964). *Ghazali's unique and unknowable God*. Leiden: Brill.

Street, T. (2004). Arabic Logic. In: D. Gabbay and J. Woods, ed., *Handbook of the History of Logic Volume 1 Greek, Indian and Arabic Logic*. Amsterdam: Elsevier B.V., pp.523-596.

Tahko, T. (2009). The Law of Non-Contradiction as a Metaphysical Principle. *The Australasian Journal of Logic*, 7.

Tahko, T. (2014). The metaphysical interpretation of logical truth. In: P. Rush, ed., *The Metaphysics of Logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.233-248.

Varzi, A. (2009). On the interplay between logic and metaphysics. *Linguistic and Philosophical Investigations*, 8.

Varzi, A. (2014). Logic, Ontological Neutrality, and the Law of Non-Contradiction. In: E. Ficara, ed., *Contradictions Logic, History, Actuality*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, pp.53-80.

Williamson, T. (2013). Logic, Metalogic and Neutrality. *Erkenntnis*, 79(S2), pp.211-231.

Zolghadr, B., (2019). Avicenna on the Law of Non-contradiction. *History and Philosophy of Logic*, 40(2), pp.105-115.

PAPER 3

Beyond the categories of truth

1. My argument:

P1. If a statement is contradictory, it is either contradictory in a substantive sense or contradictory in an insubstantive sense. [X → Y ∨ Z] This is an assumption.

P2. A statement about an ineffable God is contradictory (because it states both that God has the property of ineffability and does not have the property of ineffability: $F(\alpha) \wedge \neg F(\alpha)$). [X] This is a truth based on Islam.

P3. Therefore, a statement about an ineffable God is contradictory either in a substantive sense or insubstantive sense. [Y ∨ Z] This is derived from P1 and P2.

P4. However, it is not the case that a statement about an ineffable God is contradictory either in a substantive sense or insubstantive sense [¬ (Y ∨ Z)].

C. Therefore, P1 (the assumption that if a statement is contradictory it is either contradictory in a substantive sense or insubstantive sense) is false. [¬X] i.e., an ineffable God is contradictory beyond the ordinary categories (substantive or insubstantive) of truth.

The structure of my paper shall reflect the structure of my argument. I shall use each of the above premises as subheadings for the sake of clarity and direction.

2. If a statement is contradictory, it is either contradictory in a substantive sense or contradictory in an insubstantive sense [X → Y ∨ Z]

A contradictory statement is of the form $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ where $\wedge$ is a conjunction and $\neg$ is a negation. That is, a contradiction is both the conjunction of a statement and its negation. Under the purview of classical logic, all contradictions are considered logically false and therefore necessarily false. This is because any contradictory statement of the form $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ is an unequivocal violation of a logically valid principle, namely the law of non-contradiction, i.e. $\neg(\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha)$. In classical logic, the law of non-contradiction asserts that every instant of the form $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ is false (and a contradiction) while every instant of the form $\neg(\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha)$ is true (and a tautology). The truth of the law of non-contradiction is determined by its logical form (see Fisher (2008)). The logical form of the law of non-contradiction is one that is valid since it has no counterexample[141]. There cannot be a counterexample in a (classical[142]) case c such that $c \vDash_1 A$ *and* $c \vDash_1 \neg A$[143]. This means there cannot be a case such that A is true-in-c and $\neg A$ is true-in-c. This not only implies that the logical form of the law of non-contradiction is valid, but also that it is *true* under all possible interpretations of its propositional variables. Consequently, the law of non-contradiction is considered a tautological claim (see Beall and Logan (2017)).

---

[141] A common way to represent the given truth-value of an atomic statement in propositional logic is by using truth tables. In each of the rows of a truth table a possible assignment of truth-values to the atomic formulae are expressed; while each column represents the possible truth-values of either the compound statement or its atomic formulae. The following is the truth table for the law of non-contradiction:

P	$\neg$P	P $\wedge$ $\neg$P	$\neg$(P $\wedge$ $\neg$P)
T	F	F	T
F	T	F	T

[142] Take a classical case to be a function from the set of atomic sentences to the set $\{f, t\}$.

[143] Take an atomic sentence A to be true-in-a-case v (expressed as: $v \vDash_1 A$) when $v(A) = $ *true* and take an atomic sentence A to be false-in-a-case v (expressed as: $v \vDash_0 A$) when $v(A) = $ *false*.

Like all logical axioms, the law of non-contradiction is considered to be fundamental. This means that it does not require any presuppositional statements in order to prove its claim. In fact, from an epistemological perspective, all axioms such as this one are presumed to be self-evident. In other words, the law of noncontradiction does not require nor assume any supporting statements for its claim. Moreover, the truth of the law of non-contradiction must be intuitively *true* in the sense that anyone who understands the concept in question must deem its truth to be apparent. An equivalent example can be found in Euclidean geometry. The obviousness of the axiomatic truths of Euclidean geometry is equivalent to the obviousness of the axiomatic truth of the law of non-contradiction. Furthermore, the logical axioms such as the law of non-contradiction are also fundamental in the sense that all the theorems of a given theory can be derived from them. Theorems are well-formed-formulae that are derived from previously accepted axioms by applying the rules of inference. Accordingly, the proof of these theorems consists of a series of statements that are consistent with the axioms from which they have been derived.

However, espousing the law of non-contradiction would beg a few underlying questions. These questions would invoke a metaphysical and epistemological inquiry into the constant falsehood of all contradictions of the form $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ as well as the constant truth of the law of non-contradiction $\neg(\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha)$. The metaphysical inquiry would involve determining the intrinsic reality of contradictions as well as the nature of the falsehood/truth that is being inferred. The epistemological inquiry, on the other hand, would involve determining how we are able to know the intrinsic reality of contradictions and their nature of falsehoods/truths that is being inferred. Such inquiries predominantly occur under the scope of philosophy of logic and meta-metaphysics. The mere undertaking and occurrence of such inquiries would call into question the very axiomatic nature that has been granted to logical laws such as the law of non-

contradiction. Questioning the fundamental and self-evident nature of the law of non-contradiction would be analogous to questioning the truth of its claim.

When the truth-value of a contradictory statement is deemed logically false then it is necessarily false. To demonstrate both logical and necessary falsehood let us take statement S to be of the contradictory form $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$. That is, take both statement S and the logically contradictory form $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ to share the same logical form and semantic value. Given this, we can state their relationship as follows: $S \equiv \alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$. If a statement is a substitution instance of a negation of a valid principle of logic, then it is logically false. This is what makes statement S logically false. Statement S is a negation of a valid principle of logic, which in this case is the law of non-contradiction. A statement is necessarily false (referring to logical necessity) when a logical contradiction is implicated. Consequently, the truth-value of statement S is guaranteed to be false in virtue of the laws of logic, namely the law of non-contradiction. Given this, its truth-value cannot be otherwise. Moreover, statement S would be false in all logically possible worlds. Thus, both cases of statement S would be considered false—that is logically and necessarily false. In the former case, namely logically false, the falsehood is primarily determined by its logical form, which is a substitution instance of a negation of a valid principle of logic. In the latter case, namely necessarily false, the falsehood is determined by the logical implication. This guarantees the falsehood in a way which cannot be otherwise in any logically possible world.

Logical and necessary falsehood in both above cases offers a specific understanding of statement S. That is, it provides a universal rule which logically implies that all statements which are replacement instances of statement S will be deemed false in every possible world. We can think of this as a formal system in virtue of which we're able to discern what is logically implied. Moreover, we can ascertain statements that qualify as logical truths in virtue of their

logical form such as the law of non-contradiction. Similarly, we can ascertain statements that qualify as logical falsehoods in virtue of their form such as statement *S*. As useful as this may prove to be, it does not really provide us with a specific and satisfactory understanding of the truth-values that are being inferred. Although this system of classical logic may propose methods of reasoning that are representative of truth-preservation, it does not tell us anything about the kind or nature of falsehoods/truths that is being inferred and preserved.

However, it may be contested that it is not within the remit of classical logic to engage in matters that explore and argue for a specific kind of falsehood/truth. Nor is it the concern of logic to try and establish the nature of falsehoods/truths that are being inferred. It is common knowledge that since classical logic is a two-valued logical system, it infers falsehoods and truths by default. Logical consequence, for instance, offers a truth-preserving system in which if the premises are true then it guarantees the truth of the conclusion. Moreover, truth-tables are often drawn upon to determine the truth-value of logical functions in any given argument[144]. In spite of laying claim to falsehoods/truths, classical logic does not require any commitment to a particular kind of truth theory. Proponents of classical logic are at liberty to exercise their own preference when it comes to the kind and nature of falsehoods/truths they want to adopt.

On the one hand this outlook proposes that engaging in matters that explore the various kinds of truth and their natures (i.e., metaphysical and epistemological inquiries) is beyond the remit of classical logic. While on the other hand, it seems to imply that classical logic is compatible with a range of truth theories since its proponents are free to subscribe to whichever truth theory that appeals to them. Although this perspective may allow classical logic to operate with a great deal of proficiency, it is nonetheless problematic. The issue stems from classical logics' fundamental reliance upon truth and not just validity. This can particularly be appreciated in

---

144 See footnote 1

virtue of the laws of logic, such as the law of non-contradiction. We know, under the purview of classical logic, that statement *S* is logically and necessarily false because it is a categorical negation of not just a valid but also *true* principle of logic, namely, the law of non-contradiction. This, of course, incites a more fundamental issue which can be expressed as:

a) Is the law of non-contradiction true in virtue of its (valid) logical form? *Or*

b) Is the form of law of non-contradiction logically valid (and subsequently true) in virtue of being an intrinsic truth?

However, it makes little difference with respect to the point I am establishing as to which of the above options one selects. In either case it is evident that the truth-value of the law of non-contradiction is just as important as its validity — irrespective of which one is established first. Thus, the point still stands regardless of whether you consider the form of an argument as the preceding and determining factor of truth-value of logical principles or vice-versa. In other words, whether the law of non-contradiction is considered true in virtue of its form, its metaphysics, its inherent make-up, or even due to its intrinsic value, does not take away the truth-value that is fundamentally associated to it. This demonstrates that in cases like this, classical logic is not confined to merely determining valid inferences. Instead, its validity fundamentally relies on the truth of the laws of logic, such as the law of non-contradiction, in being able to reach a logical and semantic verdict on statements like *S*. Thus, classical logic is it not merely concerned with the sequential (syntactic) relationship between statements of a given language i.e., as to whether the argument form is valid or not, but also its truth-value.

Moreover, since it is difficult to disregard classical logic's fundamental association with truth, the truth-value in question would need explaining. This means, we would require some understanding of the nature and reality of the kind of truth that is being logically inferred. In this regard, either one truth theory may be selected or the flexibility in switching between

several truth theories may be offered. The latter option would imply that a range of various truth theories are compatible with classical logic while that may not be the case with the former option. Nevertheless, if the metaphysical and epistemological implications of a given truth theory renders classical logic as inherently flawed, then it would not be compatible with a range of truth theories as it is assumed. As to whether there are such metaphysical and epistemological implications of a certain truth theory that would render classical logic as inherently flawed is a matter that I shall not entertain at this juncture. What concerns us now is how best to understand the falsehood that is inferred from statement *S*.

Classical logic as a formal system does not provide us with a specific account of the falsehood that is inferred from statement *S*. However, we can, in the broadest sense, conceive of this falsehood in either a substantive sense or an insubstantive sense. Both broad perspectives offer a different account of truth in virtue of being a property of propositions, statements, or beliefs. That is, we can think of substantive and insubstantive accounts with respect to how the property of truth is upheld. According to a substantive account, truth is a significant property while according to the insubstantive account truth is not a significant property. An alternative way to comprehend substantive and insubstantive accounts of truth is to consider the overarching theories of truth which they both represent. In this respect, take inflationary and deflationary theories of truth. The inflationists' concept of truth consists of truth as a substantive property. The deflationists' concept of truth consists of truth as an insubstantive property.

For the concept of truth to be a property such that it is substantive would mean that the truth predicate in question possesses at least two distinguishing components. Edwards (2013) has summed both of these up in the following statement:

> Inflationary views are those that typically hold that the truth predicate has some genuinely descriptive function (perhaps, as Devitt [2001] points out, in addition to the

logical functions the deflationist advocates), and that the predicate refers to some metaphysically significant property. (Edwards, 2013, p. 280)

It is the negation of both components which, broadly speaking, delineates the concept of truth such that it is insubstantive. In this case, the truth predicate 'is true' would be considered a genuine predicate; however, its primary function would be confined to serving a particular logical purpose. This means the truth predicate does not have some genuine descriptive function. Moreover, it would be devoid of significant metaphysical weight, making it metaphysically transparent or trivial. This basic distinction seems to suggest that there is much more to truth for the inflationist than the deflationist is willing to accept. Nonetheless, truth is still considered to be a property for both inflationists and deflationists—albeit the kind of property it is evidently varies between both truth theories.

Although both of these components succeed in allowing us to draw a generic distinction between the substantive and insubstanitve accounts, it does not state the specific elements which constitute inflationary and deflationary theories of truth. Therefore, to obtain a slightly more nuanced distinction between both of these truth theories, and more specifically the substantive and insubstantive accounts that represent them, I shall refer to Sher (2016). Sher (2016) presents five central elements of the deflationary theories of truth which are representative of the insubstantive account. These, as Sher (2016) notes, are central elements that have been found in Horwich (1990/8). The central elements are as follows:

1. Frustration with past attempts to develop substantive theories of truth

2. Satisfaction with a trivial theory of truth

3. Identification of the theory of truth with a single and simple definition schema

4. Narrow conception of the role of truth in our cognitive life

5. Bold adequacy claim

The first of these elements, quite frankly, is a manifestation of a deep rooted dissatisfaction that the deflationists have amounted against the inflationists. The deflationists' dissatisfaction is primarily motived by the ineptitude and failure of the inflationists in being able to provide a substantive theory of truth that manages to capture the underlying essence of truth. The manifestation of this frustration by the deflationists is not merely a demonstration of unstable temperaments. It is the incompetency of the inflationists in providing satisfactory answers, which were thought to be subtle and profound; to the fundamental questions surrounding truth that has exasperated the deflationists. In fact, according to the deflationists the very pursuit of inquiring into the nature of truth has been exhausted by the inflationists. They have reached the limits of analysis to the extent that "hardly any progress has been made towards achieving the insight we seem to need" (Sher [quoting Horwich 1990/8:1], 2016, p. 820).

The second of these elements can be considered as a consequence of the first. That is, given the inflationists ineptitude and failure to provide a substantive account of truth, the deflationists' despair has led them to settle with a trivial account of truth. On this view, the deflationists assume that we needn't trouble ourselves with attempting to decipher the underlying essence of truth with the aid of profound philosophical investigation. Truth should be considered as a metaphysically vacuous notion that is not substantive. Accordingly, truth is entirely captured without having to rely on any metaphysical grounding. The third of these elements sheds further light on how the triviality of truth is captured. Being able to identify and capture truth instances for the deflationist is rather simple. The method is confined and neatly expressed by the equivalence schema. The equivalence schema is as follows: (ES) $<p>$ is true if and only if p which is logically expressed as: $T<p> \leftrightarrow p$. Trivial instances that are expressed

by this schema are instances of deflationary truth. A common example is "it is true that snow is white if and only if snow is white".

The fourth of these elements expresses the domain in which deflationary truth bears value. Given that deflationary truth is metaphysically vacuous and therefore trivial, its value is exclusively logical. This means that the truth-value which the deflationist would arrive at would possess no more meaning than what the equivalence schema allows. Although this helps the deflationist arrive at a truth-value in a particular sense, it is one which would impede us from attaching any significant meaning to the truth-value in question. Nonetheless, for the deflationist this is hardly an issue. In fact, this very situation makes the concept of truth invaluable for the deflationist. As Sher (2016) relates from Horwich (1990/8) "For it enables the construction of another proposition, intimately related to the one we can't identify, which is perfectly appropriate as the alternative object of our attitude" (Sher [quoting Horwich, 1990/8: 2–3], 2016, p. 820). The fifth of these elements sums up the implication of the fourth element with a universal claim. Sher (2016) mentions that while "Referring to his own version of deflationism, "minimalism," Horwich says: [O]ur thesis is that it is possible to explain *all* the facts involving truth on the basis of the minimal theory. (*Ibid*.: 6–7, my italics) The entire conceptual and theoretical role of truth may be explained on this basis. (*Ibid*.: 5)" (Sher [quoting Horwich, 1990/8: 2–3], 2016, p. 820).

Having outlined the five central elements of the deflationary theories of truth, Sher (2016) subsequently presents the substantivists take on truth. The manner in which Sher (2016) delineates the substantive account of truth is by way of negating the five central elements of deflationism.

> Substantivists reject all these elements: They are optimistic about the prospects of a substantive theory of truth, properly understood; they oppose both the idea that truth is

trivial and the idea that its philosophical theory ought to be trivial; they conceive of a worthwhile theory of truth as a full‑fledged theory rather than a single and simple definition or definition schema; they believe that truth has multiple significant tasks in our cognitive life and is not limited to a single, narrow, logical‑linguistic task; and they argue that a deflationist theory of truth cannot explain all, or even most, of the things that a philosophical theory of truth has to explain. They are especially opposed to the claim that truth does not require, or even allow, serious philosophical investigation. (Sher, 2016, p. 820)

Alternatively, Mau (2009) delineates a substantive account of truth by referring to what he terms 'the metaphysical reason', 'the explanatory-role reason', and 'the explanatory-resources reason'. Mau (2009) provides a brief synopsis of these three reasons in the following excerpt:

First, as far as the nature of truth is concerned, any account of truth that takes truth to have such a kind of non-linguistic nature is regarded as substantive: the nature that is independent of any linguistic function of the linguistic truth predicate. I call this reason 'the metaphysical reason'. Second, as far as the role of the concept of truth is concerned, any account of truth that takes the concept of truth to play a certain substantive explanatory role beyond a practical or logical role of the truth predicate is regarded as substantive. I call this reason 'the explanatory-role reason'. Third, as far as the theoretical resources to explain truth are concerned, any account of truth that appeals to more conceptual resources than the minimal ones (such as those trivial biconditionals of (T) or those plain terms that are used to express our pre-theoretic understanding of truth) to characterize truth is taken to be substantive. I call this reason 'the explanatory-resources reason', and I call an account of truth that attempts to keep the explanatory resources minimal a 'minimal account'. (Mau, 2009, p. 18)

Further on, Mau (2009) summarises these three reasons in two presuppositions that are commonly associated with substantive accounts of truth. These are "(1) truth is substantive for the metaphysical reason" and "(2) truth is substantive for the explanatory-role reason". The former of these presuppositions suggests that this account of truth is metaphysically grounded—by which I mean it enjoys a relation of metaphysical dependence[145] as opposed to a causal dependence. The truth predicate on this view would be independent of a linguistic function that is used to express it. Take for instance the nature of the property whiteness; it will be independent of the linguistic expression that is used to communicate it, namely 'white'. This 'metaphysical reason' would thus grant the substantive account of truth a degree of metaphysical significance in contrast with metaphysical triviality.

The latter of these presuppositions is an implication of the former. Given that the 'metaphysical reason' grants a substantive account of truth a degree of metaphysical significance, it thus possesses a substantive explanatory role. The substantive explanatory role seems to extend beyond a certain practical or logical function of the truth predicate. While certain practical or logical functions may fail in referring to an underlying nature of things that are metaphysically dependent, the substantive account of truth lays claim in doing so. This grants the substantive account of truth the ability to explicate how certain things are metaphysically connected with

---

[145] *Ground* is alleged to be a/the relation of metaphysical dependence, explanation, and/or priority. It is that relation the physicalist alleges to hold between the mental and the physical, that the utilitarian claims holds between moral facts and the facts about pleasure and pain, and that many claim to hold between the fact that

P and the fact that P or Q. In each case, the ground makes the grounded obtain.

The grounded metaphysically depends on is metaphysically explained by, and/or is ontologically posterior to, the ground. Ground should be distinguished from causal dependence. Ground often (and perhaps always) holds synchronically, between two relata at the same time. For example, the physicalist claims that my current pam is grounded in my current brain state. In contrast, causal dependence relates items across time. The dualist can admit that my past brain state caused my current pain, while denying that pain is grounded in the brain. (Rabin, 2018, p. 37-38)

other things. The connection between both presuppositions is somewhat evident. Mau (2009) expresses this connection in the following manner:

> It is noted that (1) and (2) are tightly connected; if (2) were true, we would have an excellent reason to think that (1) is true. For, generally speaking, if a concept of F plays its substantive explanatory role in our theories, we would have a good reason to think that its linguistic expression 'F' denotes a property with a substantive nature; that also explains why deflationists are keen to deny (2). (Mau, 2009, p. 18-19)

The delineations of substantive and insubstantive accounts of truth that have been offered by Sher (2016) and Mau (2009) prove to be insightful in different ways. Sher's (2016) approach primarily focusses on the deflationary account of truth, while Mau (2009) engages with the substantive account of truth. Both approaches are important, not merely for being able to appreciate the generic accounts of truth, but for the objective of my argument as I shall go on to demonstrate. Given that we have now obtained a relatively sufficient idea of what is meant by the two generic accounts of truth, we would now require understanding these in context of the discussion so far. Therefore, let us consider both substantive and insubstantive accounts of truth in the context of statement *S*. If you recall statement *S* is of the form α ∧ ¬α. This makes statement *S* a contradiction.

3. A statement about an ineffable God is contradictory (because it states both that God has the property of ineffability and does not have the property of ineffability: $(F(α) \land \neg F(α))$ [X]

Up until now I have referred to statement S as being equivalent to the logical form α ∧ ¬α. In line with the objective of my argument, I shall now provide a replacement instance of statement S. The replacement instance shall grant a specific meaning to the propositional variable S. Let us take the following assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' to stand in as a

replacement instance for the propositional variable *S*. Since this assumption is a replacement instance of the propositional variable *S*, it will evidently be of the logical form α ∧ ¬α and therefore contradictory. Allow me to explain this. The view of the God of Islam that I shall work with is one that I borrow from the erudite and illustrious twelfth century Islamictheologian *Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī* (d. 1111). As Watt (2014) notably points out, *al-Ghazālī* was a prime exponent of *Abū'l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī's* (d. 935)[146] theological views. From among *al-Ghazālī's* theological views regarding God, here is an excerpt that bears a significant relevance to the specific notion of God that I shall refer to:

> God does not inhere in anything, and nothing inheres in Him. He is exalted above being contained by space, and too holy to be bounded by time; on the contrary, He existed before He created time and space. He now has [the attributes] by which He was [previously characterized], and is distinguished from His creatures by His attributes. There is not in His essence what is other than He, nor in what is other than He is there [anything of] His essence. He is exalted above change [of state] and movement. Originated things do not inhere [or subsist] in Him, and accidental [events] do not befall Him. Rather, He does not cease; through the qualities of His majesty He is beyond cessation, and through the attributes of His perfection He is independent of [or does not require] any further increase of perfection. (*al-Ghazālī* translated by Watt in Renard, 2014, p. 110)

---

146 Al-Ash'ari was born at Basrah. Regarding his date of birth there is difference of opinion. Ibn Khallikan, in his discussion of the life of al-Ash'ari, mentions that he was born in 260 or 270/873 or 883 and died at Baghdad in 330/941 or some time after that. According to Shibli Nu'mani and ibn `Asakir (the author of *Tabyin Kidhb al-Muftari,* on the life and teachings of al-Ash'ari), he was born in 270/873 and died in 330/941. He was buried between Karkh and Bab al-Basrah (the gate of Basrah). He was a descendant of abu Musa al-Ash'ari, one, of the famous Companions of the Prophet. (M.M. Sharif, 1963, p. 222-223)

The distinguishing feature which sits at the heart of al-Ghazālī's belief of God is that He is unknowable[147]. Although one may be able to detect subtle sentiments that are indicative of unknowability[148] from the excerpt above, I find that Burrell (1987) has expressed this in a more apparent manner.

> Given the fact that "God is a being necessarily existing of Himself (*al-mawjud al-wajib al-wujud bi-dhatihi*)" (*Maqsad* 47, M 342–43), it should be clear that this "peculiar divine property belongs only to God and only God knows it." Moreover "it is inconceivable that anyone know it save Him or one who is His like, since He has no like, no other knows it." On such an account, "only God knows God" (*ibid*.). So the resources of philosophy confirm God's uniqueness or *tawhid*: the utter distinction of the One from all else: "everything the exercise of which is possible," which does in fact exist from that One "according to the best ways of order and perfection" (*Maqsad* 47, M 342). (Burrell, 1987, p. 181)

Considering both these excerpts, I shall assert that God transcends all human conceptions of time, space, categories, and our cognitive and linguistic capacities. God is therefore believed to be absolutely transcendent[149]. As a result of such absolute transcendence, I shall infer that in

---

147 See Fadlou Shehadi's Ghazali's Unique Unknowable God (1964)

148 It is worth noting that the sort of unknowability that I am ascribing to the Islamic God is not the kind that is manifested in Ismāʿīlī theology. The feature which distinguishes my idea of unknowability from Ismāʿīlī theology is that I don't think anything is impossible for an absolute transcendent God while they assume it is. The distinction that I am drawing on can be better appreciated in the extract below:

> From the beginning of their movement in the mid- third/ ninth century, Ismāʿīlī Shīʿites had developed a cosmology that was heavily influenced by a set of Neoplatonic ideas and that interpreted God's divine unity (*tawḥīd*) in a radical way. For Ismāʿīlī philosophers and theologians, *tawḥīd* meant that God is absolutely transcendent and cannot in any way be part of this world. He is beyond being and beyond knowability. God's absolute transcendence makes it impossible that He causes anything in His creation, since that would require some immanence on His part. (Griffel, 2017, p. 219)

149 Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that I do not ascribe absolute ineffability to the Islamic God on the grounds that He is devoid of divine attributes or properties. I believe the Islamic God is absolute ineffable in virtue of His essence and *all* His attributes. Al-Ghazālī has clearly affirmed the existence of God's attributes in the above

the Islamic tradition[150], God is *absolutely* ineffable. The 'absolute ineffability' that I have in mind is a radical type which eludes all thought and articulation of God. In this sense God would be incomprehensible and inexpressible[151]. Let us term these as conceptual and semantic ineffability sequentially. By conceptual ineffability I mean logically inconceivable and by semantic ineffability I mean linguistically inexpressible. Combining these two types of ineffability would qualify it with an *absoluteness* that allows us to distinguish it from weaker forms of ineffability. Weaker forms in ineffability are types that would be inclined to making some form of concession. This would include granting an ability to either conceive or express a notion of God or both to avoid the paradoxical scenario it gives rise to[152].

This idea of an absolute ineffable God would be a contradictory one under the rubric of classical logic. To demonstrate this, take the initial assumption that I have selected as a replacement

---

excerpt. He insinuates that God's attributes are different (in-kind as opposed to in-degree) and unlimited as well as perfect. It would follow that God is absolutely ineffable on the grounds that His attributes are unfathomable whereby we are unable to conceive and subsequently express them. More importantly, it would be incorrect to uphold the view that God is absolutely ineffable exclusively on the grounds that He has no attributes altogether which can be predicated to Him. In this case the non-existence of attributes would leave no room for them to be conceptually and semantically ineffable. Consequently, saying nothing about God would still, bizarrely, express all that there is; only because there is nothing. Thus, Kukla (2005) on this matter has expressed that such an understanding has nothing to do with ineffability.

150 It should be noted that I do not intend to speak for the whole of the Islamic tradition.

151 Despite this it should be noted that "Al-Ghazālī was convinced that God can be conceived and perceived by humans, albeit only after overcoming much difficulty by education or preparation such as "polishing of the heart."" (Griffel, 2009, p. 263)

152 See Hick (2000). The most notable reply to Alston's arguments comes from John Hick. As a part of his pluralist hypothesis, Hick maintains that the Real, which shows itself in religious or mystic experiences across cultures, is ineffable and can only be grasped in categories shaped by our respective cultures and traditions. So, if a Christian mystic experiences a personal God while Buddhists experience the non-personal state of nirvana, there is no actual contradiction, since the contradictory predicates only apply to the various personae of the Real, not to the Real itself. The Real itself is beyond the categories of human thought and is, therefore, ineffable; our predicates do not apply to it. Hick, being aware of the problems this claim implies, tries to avoid the paradox of ineffability by making a distinction between formal and substantial predicates. Formal predicates tell us nothing about what the Real is like in itself, substantial predicates do. If, e.g. I say about the Real that it is a possible object of reference, then this is just a formal predicate, while saying that it is a person is a substantial predicate. (Gäb, 2017, p. 3)

instance to stand in for the propositional variable *S*, namely, 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable'. If God is ineffable, as the claim asserts, then He cannot be conceived of and nor spoken of. Any conception of God and articulation of this conception would render Him effable (describable). The claim, nonetheless, explicitly asserts that God is *in*effable (indescribable). It means that the very claim itself, namely 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' would necessarily imply that He is effable and if He is effable then He is not ineffable. Consequently, the claim 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable', though it anticipates expressing that God is indescribable by way of stating He is ineffable, does so at the cost of describing God. This is a self-defeating claim which manifests an evident contradiction[153] which can be expressed using second-order predicate logic as: $\neg \forall x \, \forall F \, \neg (Fx \wedge \neg \, Fx)$[154] (which is equivalent to $\exists x \, \exists F$ $(Fx \wedge \neg Fx)$). This reads that the same object (God) both has *and* does not have the same property (being ineffable).

---

153 Elsewhere I have referred to this as the paradox of ineffability. A paradox can be understood as an argument which appears to offer true premises on the grounds of correct reasoning that sequentially lead on to a false conclusion (See Olin (2003)). This is how Sainsbury understands a paradox,

> . . . an apparently unacceptable conclusion derived by apparently acceptable reasoning from apparently acceptable premises. Appearances have to deceive, since the acceptable cannot lead by acceptable steps to the unacceptable. So, generally, we have a choice: either the conclusion is not really unacceptable, or else the starting point, or the reasoning, has some non-obvious flaw. (Sainsbury, 2009, p. 1)

This understanding reflects in some way as to why I have chosen to express the claim 'God is ineffable' as a paradox. Primarily, it is due to its inherent conflicting nature. The claim attempts to communicate the indescribability of God at the cost of describing Him. Apparently this claim reveals something which, without deeper inspection, seems to say what God cannot be by using a negative prefix, namely, 'in-effable'. This may appear acceptable on the condition that it has been arrived at by apparently acceptable premises. However, what it eventually implies is unacceptable. The semantic implication of the term 'ineffability' infers a direct inconsistency with the claim that is used to communicate it. Therefore, we are left with a claim which fails to assert what it intends simply because it unavoidably does what it says cannot be done.

154 This particular expression is one that defies the metaphysical version of law of non-contradiction which can be expressed as: $\forall x \, \forall F \, \neg \Diamond \, (Fx \wedge \neg \, Fx)$; meaning 'for any object *x*, and any property *F*, it is not possibly the case that *x* is both *F* and not-*F*' Or alternatively: $\forall x \, \forall F \, \Box \, \neg \, (Fx \wedge \neg \, Fx)$ meaning 'for any object *x*, and any property *F*, it is necessarily not the case that *x* is both *F* and not-*F*'.

4. Therefore, a statement about an ineffable God is contradictory either in a substantive sense or insubstantive sense [Y ∨ Z]

The propositional variable *S* (in statement *S*) can therefore be defined with the following assumption ''the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable'. Thus, considering the above explication we can express the logical and sematic status of statement *S* in the following stages:

Stage 1

Let us take the propositional variable *S* as any statement that is contradictory. We shall express this in the following argument:

a) $S \rightarrow \alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$

b) S

c) $\therefore \alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$

Stage 2

Given the above argument, let us now represent statement *S* with a specific replacement instance, namely, 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable'. This assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' which is used to stand in as a replacement instance for the propositional variable *S* is a contradictory assumption. It can be expressed using second-order predicate logic as: $\neg\forall x \ \forall F \ \neg(Fx \wedge \neg Fx)$ which is equivalent to $\exists x \ \exists F \ (Fx \wedge \neg Fx)$. Its association with statement *S* can be expressed as follows:

$S \equiv \alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$

This reads: statement *S* (the same object (God) both has *and* does not have the same property of being ineffable) is logically (and semantically) equivalent to the logical form α and not-α.

Stage 3

Let us now make the logical consequence of the above notion $S \equiv \alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ more apparent by referring to the following expression:

$S \dashv\vdash \bot$

>This reads: statement S (the same object (God) both has *and* does not have the same
>
>property of being ineffable) classically, sententially, implies a contradiction ($\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$)
>
>and a contradiction ($\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$) classically, sententially, implies statement S.

Stage 4

Let us now introduce the sematic values of the above notation. In order to express the semantic value, by which I mean the truth-value, of statement S in virtue of either a substantive or an insubstantive theory of truth, let us introduce the following symbol: ν. Provided that an interpretation of a given language is a function which assigns a particular truth-value to any given statement (which is classically constraint[155]), I shall use ν to assign the following binary truth-values: 1 (true), or 0 (false). The application of these truth-values to statement P can be presented as follows: $\nu \vDash_1 P$ or $\nu \vDash_0 P$. This expresses that either statement P shall be true, or it shall be false under the interpretation of a given language respectively.

Nonetheless, our concern is with statement S. The contradictory status of statement S (the same object (God) both has *and* does not have the same property of being ineffable) is evident and has been clearly expressed by the following logical notation: ($S \dashv\vdash \bot$). Therefore, the semantic value expressed in ($S \dashv\vdash \bot$) would have to be necessarily false. The falsehood of statement S

---

155 Classical constraint for an atomic sentence is as follows: For any atomic sentence A and any case c, either $c \vDash_1 A$ or $c \vDash_0 A$, but not both.

can be expressed as either $\nu \vDash_0 S$ or $\nu \nvDash_1 S$. However, we require a further distinguishing mechanism which can express a variation of the falsehood in question as either substantively false or insubstantively false. The logical notions stated below are expressions of $(S \dashv\vdash \perp)$ being necessarily false from a substantive and insubstantive account.

i) $(S \dashv\vdash \perp) \therefore \nu \vDash^{\text{substantive}}{}_0 \square S$ (this reads: $(S \dashv\vdash \perp)$ therefore S is substantively, necessarily false)

ii) $(S \dashv\vdash \perp) \therefore \nu \vDash^{\text{insubstantive}}{}_0 \square S$ (this reads: $(S \dashv\vdash \perp)$ therefore S is insubstantively, necessarily false)

Consequently, in both substantive and insubstanve cases that have been expressed above we learn that statement S (the same object (God) both has *and* does not have the same property of being ineffable) is necessarily false.

5. However, it is not the case that a statement about an ineffable God is contradictory either in a substantive sense or insubstantive sense [¬ (Y ∨ Z)]

I shall argue that statement S cannot be contradictory in either a substantive sense or insubstantive sense. That is to say, both accounts of falsehood fail in being able to capture and quantify the contradictory notion of an absolute ineffable God of Islam. This is not to deny the syntactical inconsistency or the contradictory status of statement S. Rather it is to argue against the broad accounts of substantive and insubstantive truth-theories that give statement S an intelligible semantic value which infers that it is necessarily false. To express this differently, I shall demonstrate that both of the following accounts of statement S:

i) $(S \dashv\vdash \perp) \therefore \nu \vDash^{\text{substantive}}{}_0 \square S$ (this reads: $(S \dashv\vdash \perp)$ therefore S is substantively, necessarily false)

ii) $(S \dashv\vdash \perp) \therefore \nu \vDash {}^{\text{insubstantive}}{}_0 \square S$ (this reads: $(S \dashv\vdash \perp)$ therefore S is insubstantively, necessarily false)

Are as follows:

i*) $(S \dashv\vdash \perp) \therefore \nu \vDash {}^{\sout{\text{substantive}}}{}_0 \square S$ (this reads: $(S \dashv\vdash \perp)$ therefore S is *not* substantively, necessarily false)

ii*) $(S \dashv\vdash \perp) \therefore \nu \vDash {}^{\sout{\text{insubstantive}}}{}_0 \square S$ (this reads: $(S \dashv\vdash \perp)$ therefore S is *not* insubstantively, necessarily false)

To establish my claim, I shall begin with an underlying question concerning statement S, namely, 'what makes statement S necessarily false'? The aim of this inquiry is not to survey or explore a variety of truth-theories to determine which one, if any, is amenable with the falsehood of statement S. Nor is the aim to engage with Alfred Tarski's T-schema in any specific way. Instead, I hope to work with two broader theories of truth that are inclusive of most, if not all, of the predominant truth-theories. These are substantive and insubstantive theories of truth which I have explicated above. Although, both boarder truth-theories are committed to the T-schema in different ways, I do not hope to entertain how their commitment significantly differs and the implications this has on statement S. My inquiry, instead, anticipates investigating into the subject-matter of logic and the underlying ontologies that motivate both substantive and insubstantive theories of truth. This initiates with the metaphysical inquiry and subsequently moves on to the epistemological one. Each of these inquiries involves the following:

i) **Metaphysical inquiry**: This would involve determining/exploring the intrinsic reality of a contradictions being necessarily false. More specifically it means determining the nature/reality of the falsehood of statement S. I shall demonstrate that we are unable

to determine the intrinsic reality of the falsehood of statement *S* on both substantive

and insubstantive accounts.

ii) **Epistemological inquiry**: This would involve determining/exploring whether we

have the epistemic privilege in being able to know the nature/reality of a contradiction

being necessarily false and if so, how? More specifically it means determining

whether we are able to know the nature/reality of the falsehood of statement *S*. I shall

demonstrate that we unable to know the nature/reality of the falsehood of statement *S*

on both substantive and insubstantive accounts.

5.1 Metaphysical inquiry

One attempt in deciphering what makes statement *S* necessarily false is by determining the

nature/reality of the falsehood of statement *S*. This would require a two phase process. The first

of which would be to consider the broad metaphysical perspectives which determine the

falsehood of statement *S* in a given logical system. The second of which would involve how

each of these broad metaphysical perspectives of a given logical system are associated with

fundamental ontological outlooks that motivate the substantiveness and insubstantiveness of

statement *S*. I shall demonstrate that the falsehood of statement *S* cannot be determined in virtue

of both of these phases of inquiry. Inquiring into both of these phases would establish my

argument in a comprehensive manner. The first phase would serve in providing the initial

understanding of how the falsehood of statement *S* is deemed to be false via two opposing

metaphysical approaches to logic. This would provide an insight into how, and at what cost,

we metaphysically arrive at the logical falsehood of statement *S*. The second phase would go

deeper in determining how each of these opposing metaphysical approaches to logic are

associated with underlying ontological outlooks that motivate substantive and insubstantive

accounts of falsehood of statement *S*. This would provide an insight into how, and whether it is possible, to ontologically arrive at what is termed 'substantive' and 'insubstantive' accounts of the falsehood of statement *S*.

5.1.1 *Phase 1: Logical realism and logical anti-realism*

When we consider the logical system in which statement *S* is considered necessarily false, we can either think of statement *S* as a general fact in the world, or a general fact about our minds, or a mere linguistic convention. To put this in slightly different terms, we either view the falsehood statement *S* in virtue of logical realism or logical anti-realism. Let us begin with what is more than often considered as the default position in nearly all matters of discourse that invokes the application of a truth predicate to statements in that discourse. This is realism. Resnik (1999) provides a useful definition in this regard:

> Logical realism is committed to at least two theses: First, there is a fact of the matter of whether something is a logical truth, a logical inconsistency or logically implies something else. (We can put this less contentiously as the thesis that claims about logical truth, etc. are true or false.) Second, that such facts (or the truth-values of such claims) are independent of us, our psychological make-up, our linguistic conventions and inferential practices. In other words, logical realism claims that matters of logic turn upon matters of fact and that these facts are not grounded in us or our practices. (Resnik, 1999, p. 181)

Cohnitz and Estrada-González (2019) provide a notable break-down of Resnik's (1999) definition of logical realism in virtue of two necessary conditions. Both of these necessary conditions correspond respectively to the two theses stated in the above definition of logical realism by Resnik (1999). The first of these is referred to as the "cognitivism condition" while

the second is referred to as the "objectivity condition". The cognitivism condition is further divided into two aspects. These are as follows:

> One is the idea that claims about logical truth, logical inconsistency, logical implication, etc. are *true* or *false*. The second aspect is that these claims have *representational content*; the claims are true or false because they correctly or incorrectly reflect certain facts. (Cohnitz and Estrada-González, 2019, p. 114)

The objectivity condition . . . "states that whatever these facts are, they are independent of us ("our psychological make-up, our linguistic conventions and inferential practices")" (Cohnitz and Estrada-González, 2019, p. 114).

Logical realists can be further understood as Platonist realists or structuralist realists[156]. For the Platonist realist there are logical facts that obtain in a certain realm of abstract objects. The Platonist realist thus accepts that there exists a dichotomy in the realm of facts – a third realm so to say – that is independent of minds and of the physical world. Additionally, these logical facts are objective and can be accurately described by a true logical theory. For the structuralist realist there are logical facts that exist in one and the same realm in which all other facts exist. There is no dichotomy in the realm of facts for the structualist realist. Consequently, the structualist realist is not committed to the existence of *abstracta*. Although for the structuralist

---

[156] Fortunately, the pursuit of an understanding of logical realism does not have to start from scratch. There have recently been a few attempts to define the view. One such attempt comes from Sandra LaPointe (2014). LaPointe, drawing on Michael Resnik (1999), suggests that logical realism in its various forms is committed to the following two theses:

> (LF) There are *logical facts* (or 'logical structure'), that is, there is a fact of the matter when it comes to the truth-value of claims about logic.

> (IND) Logical facts are independent of our cognitive and linguistic make-up and practices. They are *objective* in the sense that they are mind- and language- independent.

(Tahko, 2019, p. 2)

realist these logical facts are also objective and can be accurately described by a true logical theory, they are descriptions of general metaphysical structures of this world. Notwithstanding the distinction between both types of logical realism there appears to be a prior commitment to the existence of objective facts. These objective facts are fundamental in the sense that they determine the truth-values of logical claims.

Consequently, when statement *S* is viewed in light of logical realism in general, it already presupposes a commitment to both the cognitivism and objectivity conditions. Subscribing to both conditions thus provides the logical realist with the kind of "objective facts" which are taken to be truth-makers for logical claims such as statement *S*. Let us demonstrate this according to how logical realism has been delineated above.

If the falsehood of statement *S* is to be determined in virtue of logical realism it would primarily infer that statement *S* qualifies under both the cognitivism condition and the objectivity condition. Qualifying under both aspects of the cognitivism condition would firstly mean that statement *S* is susceptible to claims about logical inconsistency which is false. Secondly, it would mean that statement *S* has representational content. This would be the sort of representational content which incorrectly reflects certain facts in virtue of which we are able to determine the falsehood of statement *S*. Qualifying under the objectivity condition would mean that the fact of statement *S* being false is one that is independent of our cognitive and linguistic make-up and practices. Statement *S* in this case is objective given that it is mind and language independent.

Furthermore, if the falsehood of statement *S* is determined in virtue of a Platonist realist it would mean that statement *S* is a logical fact that exists in a certain realm of abstract objects that is independent of us. Statement *S* can be accurately described by a true logical theory. If on the other hand the falsehood of statement *S* is determined in virtue of a structuralist realist

it would mean that statement *S* is a logical fact that exists in the same realm of facts as all other facts. Much like the Platonist realist, the structualist realist would claim that statement *S* can be accurately described by a true logical theory. Unlike the Platonist realist however, this logical theory in describing statement *S* would provide a general metaphysical structure of the world.

Alternatively, logical anti-realism would appear to be a rejection of the objectivity condition. This would mean that there are logical facts albeit not ones that are independent of our cognitive and linguistic make-up and practices. Although logical facts may well exist, their existence is one which is mind and language dependent. Accordingly, an anti-realist outlook on logic needn't be considered as a rejection of an epistemological view[157]. It is a rejection of the objectivity condition, which specifically draws on logical facts being independent of our cognitive and linguistic make-up and practices. The objectivity condition does not draw on our epistemological ability in being able to know those objective logical facts in any apparent manner. Thus, anti-realism about logic is a rejection of a specific condition of logical realism. Furthermore, the variations of anti-realism are many. However, we need not concern ourselves with the various forms of anti-realism since for the purposes of this paper the generic characterisation provided shall prove sufficient.

However, logical anti-realism is not explicitly confined to the rejection of the objectivity condition. It has serious implications on the cognitivism condition. This can be appreciated by considering the status of the existence of logical facts that are dependent upon our cognitive

---

157 It is important to distinguish anti-realism about logic from epistemic views which ground our knowledge of logic in our psychology, linguistic or inferential practice. Logical realism as I have characterized it is a metaphysical view rather than an epistemological one. Thus one might hold that although a truth' s being logically true is independent of us, our recognizing something as logically true derives from our internalizing or knowing or reflecting upon our inferential practice or our linguistic conventions or our powers of imagination. (Resnik, 1999, p. 181)

and linguistic make-up and practices. In this case it is worth questioning as to whether we are able to determine, in any conclusive manner, a truth-value about any logical claims. Moreover, would such logical claims have representational content that correctly or incorrectly reflect certain facts? An affirmation of both questions is what Michael Dummett (1991) termed 'realism'. For Dummett, the commitment to realism essentially meant subscribing to the thesis that every thought is either true or false[158]. This meant that the overarching debate between realism and anti-realism, for Dummett, was primarily situated in matters concerning the laws of logic. The dispute between the Platonists and intuitionists manages to capture what Dummett actually means here. The Platonists who are realists about numbers affirm the principle of bivalence and that truth may transcend evidence, while the intuitionists who are anti-realists about numbers reject both claims. Therefore, the implications of rejecting the objectivity condition would call into question the cognitivism condition. If we are to adopt a logical anti-realism which conforms with Dummett's view in this regard, then it would also mean rejecting the cognitivism condition.

If the falsehood of statement *S* is to be determined in virtue of logical anti-realism then it would inevitably call into question both the cognitivism and objectivity condition. Let us begin with the more obvious rejection; which is the rejection of the objectivity condition. In this case statement *S* will express a logical fact that exists; yet, it will be one which is dependent on our cognitive and linguistic make-up and practices. The existing logical fact expressed by statement *S* is a categorical negation of the law of non-contradiction. Its existence, nonetheless, will be grounded in our cognitive and linguistic make-up and practices. Consequently, this would infer a rejection of both aspects of the cognitivism condition. The first aspect will be rejected given

---

158 Be that as it may, the kernel of any realism, in Dummett's view, remains a commitment to the thesis that every thought is either true or not true, independently of any capacity on our part to tell which. That is the thesis, of all realist theses, that 'has the greatest metaphysical resonance'(Dummett, 1991b, p. 326). (Weiss, 2015, p. 17)

that that the truth-value of the logical fact expressed by statement *S* would be dependent on our cognitive and linguistic make-up and practices. The second aspect will be rejected given that statement *S* would not have any representational content since it is mind and language dependent. A negation of both conditions would thus leave the falsehood of statement *S* in an extremely precarious state.

Therefore, attempting to determine the falsehood of statement *S* in virtue of both cases of logical realism and anti-realism seems to problematize the very assumption of statement *S*. As you will recall the assumption selected to stand in as a replacement instance for the propositional variable *S* was 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable'. According to the system of classical logic this is a contradictory statement which is logically and thus necessarily false. Arriving at the falsehood of statement *S* in virtue of logical realism would in essence subject the assumption selected to stand in as a replacement instance for the propositional variable *S* to both the cognitivism and objectivity conditions. This would mean that the God of Islam would have to qualify under both conditions to arrive at the falsehood inferred by statement *S*.

For the God of Islam to qualify under the first aspect of the cognitivism condition would mean that He is susceptible to claims about logical inconsistency which is in this case is false. Qualifying under the second aspect of the cogntivism condition would mean the God of Islam has representational content. This would be the sort of representational content which *incorrectly* reflects certain facts in virtue of which we are able to determine the falsehood of the claim made by statement *S*. Subsequently, for the God of Islam to qualify under the objectivity condition it would mean that the fact of the assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' being false is one that is independent of our cognitive and linguistic make-up and practices. The God of Islam in this case would be an entity that is objective given that He is mind and language independent.

In all of the above cases the very assumption of statement *S*, namely 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable', is being negated. If the God of Islam is deemed to qualify under both of necessary conditions of logical realism in order to arrive at the falsehood inferred by statement *S* then it evidently does so at a cost. The cost is one which cannot allow for the God of Islam to be absolutely ineffable. This is because qualifying under the very conditions of logical realism quantifies the God of Islam in ways that ultimately allows us to arrive at a truth-value about Him. Such quantification would contravene the absolute ineffability of the God of Islam. The absolute ineffability would no longer be able to sustain its two comprising elements, namely conceptual ineffability, and semantic ineffability. Conceptual ineffability would be compromised under both aspects of the cognitivism condition while semantic ineffability would be compromised under the objectivity condition.

The same problem persists while attempting to determine the falsehood of statement *S* in virtue of logical anti-realism. The assumption of statement *S*, namely 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable', would in this case be accepted as the violation of a logical law and thus false. Nonetheless, the falsehood of this assumption would be grounded in our cognitive and linguistic make-up and practices. This would mean that the assumption regarding the God of Islam is mind and language dependent. Furthermore, it would reject both aspects of the cognitivism condition. In this regard the rejection of the first aspect would imply that the truth-value of 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' is dependent on our cognitive and linguistic make-up and practices. Rejection of the second aspect would imply that the assumption selected to stand in as a replacement instance for the propositional variable *S*, namely, 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' has representational content.

The additional issue with logical anti-realist resides in it being mind and language dependent. This also quantifies the God of Islam, although not as the cognitivism condition would. Instead,

logical anti-realism would quantify the God of Islam with the aid of the mind and language –
perhaps in a subjective sense. Both would directly contravene conceptual and semantic
ineffability respectfully. Therefore, being able to arrive at the falsehood of virtue of the
assumption selected to stand in as a replacement instance for the propositional variable S,
namely, 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' in virtue of logical anti-realism would also
be at the cost of absolute ineffability.

5.1.2 *Phase 2: Ontological realism and Ontological deflationism*

In phase 1 of our inquiry, we demonstrated how the falsehood of statement S cannot be
determined by both logical realism and logical anti-realism. In this phase of our inquiry, we
shall discuss the two underlying ontological outlooks that motivate the substantiveness and
insubstantiveness which logical realism and logical anti-realism subscribe to. These are
ontological realism and ontological deflationism respectively. I shall explicate how each of
these ontological outlooks motivates the substantive and insubstantive accounts of falsehood
of statement S. The aim would be to provide an insight into how, and whether, it is possible to
ontologically arrive at what is termed 'substantive' and 'insubstantive' accounts of the
falsehood of statement S. I shall ultimately demonstrate that a substantive account of truth that
is closely associated with ontological realism and a deflationary account of truth that is closely
associated with ontological deflationism are both unable to determine the falsehood of
statement S. To initiate this inquiry, I shall begin with ontological realism and subsequently
move on to ontological deflationism.

Ontological realism is the view that "many or all ontological disputes are substantial or
(synonymously) serious" (Tahko, 2015, p. 66). One way to appreciate the actual meaning of
this definition is to simply contrast is with ontological deflationism. Ontological deflationism

is the view that "many or all ontological disputes are non-substantial or misguided" (Tahko, 2015, p. 66). However, I don't think a negative approach, such as this one, manages to express the actual meaning of ontological realism. To obtain a satisfactory understanding of ontological realism we ought to refrain from relying on its opposing view and attempt to identify it for what it is itself. In order to achieve this, I shall refer to two integral components of ontological realism. The first is its association to substantiveness and the second is to focus on quantifier meanings.

An apparent observation regarding ontological realism and ontological deflationism is that the former is associated with substantiveness while the latter is associated with insubstantiveness. Once more, we ought to have a clear understanding about what we mean when we refer to words like 'substantive' and 'insubstantive'. This is primarily because a lack of complete understanding of these integral concepts would shroud the definition of ontological realism and ontological deflationism. Consequently, I shall refer to both Sher (2016) and Mau (2009) in understanding substantive and insubstanitve accounts of truth in defining ontological realism (and deflationism respectively). This would mean that ontological debates are substantive and serious in the sense that:

a) They reject the five central elements that Sher (2016) has drawn from Horwich (1990/8).

b) They conform to what Sher (2016) has outlined in characterising substantivist take.

c) They conform to Mau's (2009) characterisation of substantivism which involves the three reasons.

This approach offers a comprehensive explication of how we might understand ontological realism. That is, it provides an extensive understanding of what it means for ontological debates

to be substantive. Therefore, substantivism in a sense, grants us a privileged access to the structure of reality in a reliable manner. This brings us to quantifier meanings. In order for substantivism to qualify in all of the three above senses (a, b, c), it fundamentally requires, as Theodore Sider (2009) puts it, to 'carve at the joints'. According to Sider (2009),

> The central question of metaontology is that of whether there are many equally good quantifier meanings, or whether there is a single best quantifier meaning. It is a question about nature's joints; it is a question of *how much quantificational structure the world contains*. To put my cards on the table: I think that there is indeed a single best quantifier meaning, a single inferentially adequate candidate meaning that (so far as the quantifiers are concerned) carves at the joints. That is: I accept *ontological realism.* (Sider, 2009, p. 397)

A single best quantifier meaning for Sider (2009) is one that carves at the joints. This means that the quantification which Sider (2009) adopts provides an accurate representation of how things in reality actually are. It "latches on to the structure of reality in a reliable manner" (Tahko, 2015, p. 50). This allows for 'truth-seekers' to be able to discern the objective structure of reality and thus is aptly referred to as ontological realism.

This delineation provides us with an understanding as to how we may identify ontological realism for what it is itself. Moreover, it provides the underlying structure for both necessary conditions of logical realism, namely, the cognitivism and objectivity conditions. Both conditions would have to commit to some form of ontological realism (although it needn't specifically be Sider's version) which is ultimately able to discern how we're able to pick out a meaning that best suits for the purposes of ontology. Both aspects of the cognitivism condition as well as the objectivity condition would dissolve if there was no single best quantifier meaning. That is, if there was a fundamental disconnect between truth-seekers (such

as us) and the structure of reality then the necessary conditions of logical realism would lose all substantiveness.

If the falsehood of statement *S* is substantive from an ontological realist perspective, it would mean that the falsehood in question is one that carves at the joints. This would imply that the assumption selected to stand in as a replacement instance for the propositional variable *S*, namely, 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' has a single best quantifier meaning which latches on to the structure of reality in a reliable manner. In this case, we – the truth-seekers – would be able to discern the objective structure of reality concerning this very statement in a trustworthy manner. The verdict of which must be false. This is because the statement is contradictory. It cannot be true under any circumstance since there are no instances in the structure of reality that are inconsistent[159]. Given that a single best quantifier meaning is one that picks out a meaning that is *best* for the purposes of ontology, there cannot be instances which pick out contradictions. For if there were, it would mean that carving at the joints would also involve latching on to inconsistent structures of reality in a reliable manner.

Aside from the matter as to whether there are contradictory instances within the structure of reality; ontological realism poses problems for the God of Islam. The falsehood of statement *S*, namely, 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' is considered to be substantive in virtue of ontological realism. This is because a single best quantifier meaning fails in quantifying over a contradictory notion of an absolute ineffable God of Islam. It does not carve nature at the joints since an absolute ineffable God that is contradictory cannot latch on to the consistent

---

159 Priest (1999) thinks that the observable word, namely all that is observably the case, is only inconsistent if and only if some contradictory instances $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ are both true and observable. However, according to Priest (1999) such inconsistencies are not observable. If any such inconsistencies had been observable then we would have perceived them. Aside from experiencing the odd visual illusion, we do not perceive any such inconsistencies. Therefore, our perceptions of the world are entirely consistent, which in turn, makes the observable world consistent.

structure of reality. There are at least two underlying assumptions that prove to be problematic for an absolute ineffable God in this analysis. The first assumption is that an absolute ineffable God is either going to be *identical* with the structure of reality in question or He is going to be *included* in it[160]. The former of these options would have to be ruled out. This is because if an absolute ineffable God, which is a contradictory notion, was identical with this reality then the very reality He is identical with would also have to be contradictory. The ontological realist would not be willing to accept this idea. The latter of these options is problematic since it would infer that an absolute ineffable God possess a univocal existence with His creation. That is to say, an absolute ineffable God of Islam possesses the very same kind of existence and being as His creation. The status of God's existence and being is qualitatively no different to any of His creation. Consequently, we the truth-seekers would be able to discern matters about an absolute ineffable God since He would be susceptible to quantification much like all His creation.

Therefore, ontological realism is associated with substantive analysis in the sense that it not only conforms to both Sher's (2016) and Mau's (2009) understanding (as outlined above in a, b, and c), but more precisely, to a single best quantifier meaning which carves at the joints. It is the fundamental commitment to such views on the part of ontological realism which cannot determine the falsehood of statement *S*. For if it did it would be at the cost of stripping the God of Islam of absolute transcendence. This is because God would then be susceptible to being carved at the joints in a reliable manner. His existence and being would not transcend all human conceptions of time, space, categories, and our cognitive and linguistic capacities. Consequently, God would no longer remain absolutely ineffable since we, the truth-seekers, would have privileged access in making substantive claims about Him.

---

160 See Ahsan, A. (2017). A Realist Approach in Analytic Theology and the Islamic Tradition. *Philosophy and Theology*, 29(1), pp.101-132.

But why should one adopt ontological realism as a starting point in our inquiry? Aside from the ontological and epistemological privileges of carving at the joints, its substantive take on determining matters such as an absolute ineffable God don't seem to get off the ground. Of course, if one is prepared to adopt ontological realism from the outset, and thus determines the falsehood of statement *S* in a substantive manner, then it seems they are happy to endure the cost at which they arrive at this truth-value. Sider certainly seems like one candidate who would run with this line of inquiry. For Sider (2011), ontological realism is the most natural way one can think about the world. Given how naturalistic it is, he refers to ontological realism as "knee-jerk realism". It is this "knee-jerk realism" that sets the starting point of human inquiry which ". . . is to *conform* itself to the world, rather than to *make* the world. The world is "out there", and our job is to wrap our minds around it." (Sider, 2011, p. 18). Sider (2011) takes this to be a 'metaphysically privileged' position which is, as he puts it, his "deepest philosophical conviction". Thus, he does not see the need to provide any separate argument for it and takes it as a given (a brute fact).

Consequently, Sider's "knee-jerk realism", which is supposedly 'metaphysically privileged' and an "unargued presupposition", would ultimately be the view in virtue of which we determine the substantive falsehood of statement *S*. This is ironic because the substantiveness which ontological realists lay claim to would be grounded in nothing more than a mere intuition. It seems unmerited, by definition, to establish what is thought to be 'substantive' upon "knee-jerk realism" which itself is no more than a mere philosophical conviction. Despite how obviously natural and intuitive this position may seem; I can't seem to think how it would have been granted a metaphysically privileged position in virtue of which substantiveness is discerned. It's almost as though the realist has made up her mind about the object of her inquiry, namely, how "the world is "out there", waiting to be discovered rather than constructed—all that good stuff" (Sider, 2011, p. 65). However, I don't see this to be an adequate reason to never

have questioned it, or as Sider (2011) says "giving it up would require a reboot too extreme to contemplate; and I have no idea how I'd try to convince someone who didn't share it" (Sider, 2011, p. 18). Given this foundational issue, the substantive falsehood of statement *S* that is determined by ontological realism is unfounded.

Rejecting ontological realism would equate to a rejection of either one of the two theses which are essential to it. This would mean either rejecting that no ontological facts exist or rejecting that ontological facts are not objective. A rejection of either one of these would lead to a type of ontological anti-realism while a rejection of both would lead to a radical type of scepticism. Depending on which of the two theses, or necessary conditions as we described them above, one goes on to reject it will have different implications. I shall focus on the rejection of the second thesis, which we referred to above as the objectivity condition. Accordingly, the first thesis, which we referred to above as cognitivism condition, would remain intact. I still think that both conditions are closely connected. Rejecting the one would most certainly have serious implications on the other. Nonetheless, the *manner* in which one rejects the second thesis can vary. I shall focus on the ontological disputes that are considered a matter of mere semantic preference and are trivial. Of course, this does not imply that there aren't ontological facts of some kind. This is referred to as ontological defaltionism.

Ontological deflationism, as Tahko (2015) has outlined, is the view which considers ontological disputes to be of the following nature:

a) Merely verbal (a matter of semantic and linguistic preference)

b) Relatively trivial

The first of these (a) infers that ontological disputes are merely verbal in the sense that they do not occupy composition and spatiotemporal co-location. Consequently, merely verbal disputes

can be resolved by adopting alternative vocabulary. Ontological deflationists in this sense need not worry about how differing translations in the shifting vocabulary would alter their meanings. Sider (2009) for instance says:

> A merely verbal dispute over whether geese live by the 'bank' can be resolved by a shift in vocabulary. One side will be happy for her word 'bank' to be translated as 'river bank', the other for his word 'bank' to be translated as 'financial bank'; and each will agree that geese live only by the river bank. These non-hostile translations are mutually acceptable to the disputants, and the dispute evaporates once they are introduced. (Sider, 2009, p. 395-396)

The second (b) expresses how ontological disputes and more specifically, 'ontological discoveries' as Tahko (2015) puts it, lack the kind of significance you may expect discoveries such as in science to possess. This would mean that ontological discoveries would fail to be 'empirically tractable'. Tahko (2015) provides the following example:

> If we know all the properties of a lump of bronze, which happens to be in the shape of a statue, there seems to be little at stake when we ask whether the lump and statue are two different things spatiotemporally co-located or just one thing. The answer, one might think, reflects only our semantic, conceptual, or linguistic preferences. (Tahko, 2015, p. 72)

When you combine both of these features in virtue of which ontological deflationism is identified one can begin to appreciate how ontological debates are associated with insubstantivism. Once again, to be more specific about what we mean when referring to the term 'insubstantive', I shall adopt Sher's (2016) and Mau's (2009) charaterisation of insubstantive accounts of truth. This would mean that ontological debates that are insubstanitve are 'non-substantial or misguided' in the following sense:

a) They accept the five central elements that Sher (2016) has drawn from Horwich (1990/8).

b) They defy what Sher (2016) has outlined in characterising substantivist take.

c) They defy Mau's (2009) characterisation of substantivism which involves the three reasons.

Adopting the above characterisation of insubstantive accounts of truth most certainly offers a comprehensive explication of how we might understand ontological deflationism. However, it is worth making a specific distinction from a generic version of ontological deflationism (Carnapian version) to a more precise version that is commonly associated to Eli Hirsch. Briefly mentioning these would serve at least two purposes. The first would be to obtain a more specific idea of ontological deflationism and its association with a deflationary account of truth that is delineated by Hirsch. The second would be to establish how this specific idea of ontological deflationism is unable to determine the falsehood of statement *S*. Although Hirsch (2009) refers to his position as 'roughly Carnapian' he excludes himself from Carnap's idea of ontological deflationism on at least three specific matters.

The first of these matters involves Hirsch (2009) referring to his position as a 'robustly realist' one. For Hirsch (2009) there is a fact to the matter that the world and the things it contains exist. We know this, for the most part, independently of our knowledge and language. Thus, for Hirsch (2009) our subjective and linguistic choices do not determine the existence of the world and its constituents. These choices do, nonetheless, determine the meaning we derive from words such as 'what exists'. The upshot of this is that when such words, or similar ones, are taken to correspond to existential quantification then the meaning of the existential quantifier is open to a disparity between one language to another. This is because our subjective

and linguistic choices in our or any given language will vary with respect to how (or in what manner) it goes about determining the meaning of 'existence'.

The second of these matters has to do with unpacking the term 'merely verbal'. For Hirsch (2009) ". . . an issue in ontology (or elsewhere) is "merely verbal" in the sense of reducing to a linguistic choice only if the following condition is satisfied: Each side can plausibly interpret the other side as speaking a language in which the latter's asserted sentences are true (Hirsch, 2009, p. 231). In this case, it's only when disputants advocating opposing views manage to concede that each of them speaks the truth in their respective language, when the matter would be considered 'merely verbal'. Even though reaching an agreement of this kind is uncommon – particularly within philosophical disputes – each disputant *ought* to consider the other as speaking the truth.

Therefore, a dispute would qualify as 'merely verbal' once the linguistic choices have been reassessed to the point where the dispute dissipates. Consequently, it would render the dispute as non-substantial. This would be acknowledged once its disputants have reached an agreement on the given objective facts which they were incidentally using different terms or languages to express. For Hirsch (2009) such matters are not confined to dissimilar terminology or language. Instead, it also includes competing views and ideas that are advocated by philosophers. Just as a reassessment of our linguistic choices can eventually dissolve disputes about objective facts, they can also dissolve conceptual disputations.

The third and final of these matters is an extension of the preceding matter. Given Hirsch's (2009) condition, mentioned above, under which a dispute qualifies as being 'merely verbal'; he further insists that not all disputes are 'merely verbal'. That is, some disputes can and do

fail to be 'merely verbal' in which case they are substantial[161]. Unlike Carnap, Hirsch (2009) concedes that not all disputes are 'merely verbal', which is to say not all disputes are insubstantive. To identify these circumstances under which disputes are not 'merely verbal', disputants on either side of the debate must have exercised what he calls 'the most plausibly charitable interpretation'. Only once both disputants have exercised a genuine charitable interpretation and still have not been able to interpret each other's assertions as true in their respective language, can such a dispute be considered *not* 'merely verbal'.

If the falsehood of statement S is insubstantive from an ontological deflationary perspective (as delineated by Hirsch (2009)) it would firstly (corresponding to the matters above) comply with a 'robust realist' take. In this sense the realist aspect would declare that there is a fact of the matter that the world and the things it contains exist. This would include the existence of statement S. That is, given that there is a fact of the matter that the world and the things it contains exist, so does the assumption selected to stand in as a replacement instance for the propositional variable S, namely, 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable'. There are at least two issues with this initial take. The first issue is that how much, if any, of the assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' would actually be a matter of fact that has anything to do with the world or the things it contains. On this view God's existence would be considered amongst the world and the things it contains. The existence of God and the world along with the things it contains would be univocal. God would no longer be *absolutely* ineffable in the sense that He would be humanly comprehensible and expressible. This would situate God as part of the ontological furniture of the world, stripping Him of His absolute transcendence.

---

161 Hirsch mentions the debate between Platonists and nominalists as an example of a debate that he considers not to be verbal (Tahko, 2015, p. 53).

The second issue is that this initial realist take would give rise to the same, if not very similar, issues of ontological realism that we have discussed above. However, given that this position is a deflationary one, declaring the fact that 'the God of Islam is ineffable' merely exists without confining it to the world or the things it contains may seem a little less problematic. In actual fact it is not. This is because if the matter concerning the existence of 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' is a deflationary one, then the manner in which 'existence' (in this instance) corresponds to existential quantification shall be open to interpretation from one language to another. This means the manner in which the term 'exists' pertaining to 'the God of Islam is ineffable' would be left open to our subjective and linguistic choices. From this perspective the falsehood of statement *S* would be determined by to our subjective and linguistic choices. Yet this is only a partial depiction of how the falsehood of statement *S* would be considered if it was insubstantive from an ontological deflationary perspective. Let take a look at the remaining two matters to obtain a complete idea.

Moreover, the falsehood of statement *S* would be 'merely verbal'. This means to say that the assumption selected to stand in as a replacement instance for the propositional variable *S*, namely, 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' bears no real ontological significance. If a dispute broke out between two philosophers about the falsehood of the contradictory statement *S*, it would only be a matter of time before both disputants eventually agree on the falsehood of such a statement (in their respective languages). Alternatively put, it would only be a matter of time before both disputing philosophers agree that it is *true* that statement *S* is false. The time it takes for them in reaching this agreement would be spent in assessing and reassessing the linguistic and conceptual choices made on the part of each disputant. For those philosophers who subscribe to ontological realism and espouse a substantive take on such matters, this needn't even be a dispute. If it ever is, it shall dissipate rapidly since there's hardly any question about contradictions being true in any sense (as long as they don't subscribe to dialetheism).

On the other hand, in the context of ontological deflationism, this dispute does not have a glaringly obvious answer that is objective in any sense. It is not common knowledge for an ontological deflationist that every contradiction is false and therefore statement *S* must also be false. So the time it takes before this dispute dissipates for philosophers who subscribe to ontological deflationism, is not time spent in reaching an objective (logical) fact. Instead, its time spend in the assessment and reassessment of linguistic and conceptual choices only to arrive at the falsehood of statement *S*.

Given this, the falsehood of statement *S* and more specifically the falsehood of 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' would be reduced to linguistic and conceptual preferences. A debate regarding the assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' would thus be considered relatively trivial. This would mean that once disputants who are debating 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' manage to arrive at an agreement with regards to the kinds of linguistic and conceptual choices they make about this assumption, their agreement would ultimately be the case. Ironically, this may seem promising in one respect. We know that the truth-value of this matter depends upon the subjective nature of disputants, namely, the linguistic and conceptual choices that the disputants make. Suppose if the disputants, oddly enough, manage to agree on the *truth* of statement *S* as opposed to its falsehood. In such as case statement *S* would be considered *true* in an insubstantive sense. Nonetheless, as favorable as this may appear, it is problematic for the assumption selected to stand in as a replacement instance for the propositional variable *S*, namely, 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable'. In fact, regardless of the truth-value we arrive at in virtue of ontological deflationism, it reduces the very assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' to being 'merely verbal'. As a result of this, it divests an absolute ineffable God of ontological status altogether irrespective of whether the assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' is true *or* false.

The final matter concerning Hirsch's (2009) ontological deflationism allows us to explore the possibility of statement *S* to qualify as being *not* 'merely verbal'. To illustrate this let us take the scenario above of the two philosophers who subscribe to ontological deflationism. If these philosophers happen to engage in a dispute about the assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable', it will mean that they are in essence attempting to reach an agreement on the matter by assessing and reassessing their linguistic and conceptual choices about this assumption. However, let us suppose that in this case they fail in genuinely arriving at an agreement. Their attempt in trying to arrive at an agreement regarding this assumption has involved exercising what Hirsch (2009) calls 'the most plausibly charitable interpretation'. Yet despite this, they still have not been able to interpret each other's assertions as being true in their respective languages. For both philosophers to arrive at this impasse means that the dispute about 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' is *not* 'merely verbal' and therefore substantive. However, this does not help in the case of our assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable'. If the assumption is considered *not* 'merely verbal' and thus substantive it becomes prone to the very same issues we've covered under the purview of logical and ontological realism.

5.2 Epistemological inquiry

Much, if not all, of what has been drawn on in the metaphysical inquiry raises important epistemological questions. The central question concerning this inquiry is whether we have the epistemic privilege in being able to know the nature/reality of a contradiction being necessarily false and if so, how? More specifically, is it epistemologically possible to determine whether we can know the nature/reality of the falsehood of statement *S* on both substantive and insubstantive accounts? We could in pursuing this inquiry draw on types of epistemic realism and epistemic anti-realism. In the case of epistemic realism our task would involve

investigating whether the existence of mind-independent epistemic facts grants us *substantive* reasons for belief in the nature/reality of the falsehood of statement *S*. While in the case of epistemic anti-realism our task would involve investigating whether the existence of mind-dependent epistemic facts grants us *insubstantive* reasons for belief in the nature/reality of the falsehood of statement *S*. However, I do not anticipate drawing on both these rival positions in any specific manner. Instead, I hope to draw on a particular epistemic position which attempts to forge a middle ground between ontological realism and ontological anti-realism. This position is called 'epsitemicism' which has been proposed by Karen Bennett (2009). In virtue of epistemicism, I shall demonstrate that we are unable to know the nature/reality of the falsehood of statement *S* on both substantive and insubstantive accounts.

Epistemicism as Bennett (2009) describes is the view that "'There are *F*s' is either true or false, and disputes about its truth-value are not verbal disputes. But there is little justification for believing either that it is true or that it is false" (Bennett, 2009, p. 42). Conceding that there is a fact to the matter as to whether there are *F*s or not by mentioning they have a truth-value seems to suggest a commitment to ontological realism. To avoid this Bennett (2009) subscribes to a weaker position of epistemicism which, supposedly, is compatible with both ontological realism and ontological anti-realism. Bennett (2009) describes this weaker position of epistemicism as the view that "Disputes about the truth-value of 'there are *F*s' are not verbal disputes. But there is little justification for believing either that it is true or that it is false" (Bennett, 2009, p. 42). This position does not explicitly lay claim to there being a fact of the matter about whether there are *F*s, namely, that matters about *F*s are either true or false. All this claim suggests is that disputes about the truth-value of whether there are *F*s are not verbal. This distinction makes way for this weaker position of epistemicism to be compatible with both ontological realism and ontological anti-realism. This is because the claim 'there are *F*s' is can be interpreted by both ontological realists and ontological anti-realists.

If we consider the falsehood of statement S from the perspective of Bennett's (2009) epistemicism it would imply at least two things. The first of these would imply that the truth-value of the dispute about the assumption selected to stand in as a replacement instance for the propositional variable S, namely, 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable', is not merely verbal. Moreover, the implicit supposition in this instance would be that such matters exist. This view eliminates hardline anti-realism and semanticism. The hardline anti-realist view would be that there is no fact of the matter about whether statement S exists or not and that statement S does not have a determinate truth-value. However, according to epistemicism such matters do exist. The semanticism view would be that the dispute about statement S is merely verbal. Epistemicism clearly denies this. The second of these would imply that although the truth-value of statement S is not merely verbal, there is insufficient reason for believing either that it is true or that it is false. This would mean that while the truth-value of the assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' is not merely verbal we are unable to reach any decisive position as to whether it is true or false. It seems like the truth and falsehood that is being ruled out is more closely associated with a substantivist account than it is an insubstantivist account of truth and falsehood (although not entirely). This is because by eliminating the truth-value being merely verbal it rules out at least one perspective of deflationary and insubstantive truth and falsehood[162].

At first glance epistemicism seems appealing. It supposedly gives the impression that it suspends judgment as to whether we can determine the falsehood and even truth, for that matter, of statement S. This would mean that we are able to lay claim that there is a truth-value to our assumption, namely, 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' that is not merely verbal. Moreover, the truth-value of the matter remains indeterminate since we do not possess

---

162 As to whether it rules out Amie Thomasson's (2009) version of deflationism is an interesting question.

sufficient justification for believing whether our assumption is actually false or even true. To put this into perspective, epistemicism would then (revisiting the following logical expression) allow for both i* and ii*:

i*) $(S \dashv\vdash \bot) \therefore \nu \vDash {}^{\text{~~substantive~~}}{}_0 \Box S$ (this reads: $(S \dashv\vdash \bot)$ therefore S is *not* substantively, necessarily false)

ii*)$(S \dashv\vdash \bot) \therefore \nu \vDash {}^{\text{~~insubstantive~~}}{}_0 \Box S$ (this reads: $(S \dashv\vdash \bot)$ therefore S is *not* insubstantively, necessarily false)

However, this is problematic for at least two reasons. Firstly, prior to buying into epistemicism, we need to be clear about *how* there is a truth-value about the assumption that 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable'. In other words, what is the status of the existence of this claim such that it has, or is susceptible to, a truth-value although that truth-value is indeterminate? If the existence of this matter is presumed to be univocal in the Quinean sense, then accepting the truth-value to be indeterminate would hardly make a difference in the case of an absolute ineffable God of Islam. This is because considering an absolute ineffable God's very existence to be univocal with the existence of His creation would undercut the very notion of absolute ineffability. We touched on this earlier. Thereafter, it would hardly make any difference in adopting an epistemological view such as epistemicism which motivates an intdeterminate truth-value. Therefore, it would make little sense to uphold the existence of an absolute ineffable God of Islam to be univocal and yet assume that subscribing to epistemicism would preserve His absolute transcendence.

Secondly, an indeterminate truth-value about the assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' is not completely free from making a claim itself. The fact that there is little justification for believing either that statement S is true or that it is false is itself a propositional statement which offers a truth-value. Given this, we can think of this statement, namely, 'there

is little justification for believing either that statement *S* is true or that it is false' as either being *true* or *false*. In virtue of epistemicism this statement is presumably true. It's a little difficult to think that this is an insubstantive account of truth since episemicism rules out such matters being merely verbal. Nonetheless, even if it were insubstantive in the way characterised above by Sher (2016) and Mau (2009) the implications would bring us back to where we had begun. The matter is very similar if it is considered to be a substantive account of truth as characterised by Sher (2016) and Mau (2009). Much, if not all of what we have covered would be a reoccurring theme in this respect.

6. Therefore, P1 (the assumption that if a statement is contradictory, it is either contradictory in a substantive sense or insubstantive sense) is false [¬X]

There seems to very little, or even hardly any, squabble amongst metaphysicians who are committed to classical logic about the obvious falsity of contradictions. It is pretty evident that classical logic deems contradictions of the form $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ logically false and thus necessarily false. This is because it is an unequivocal violation of a logically valid principle, namely the law of non-contradiction, i.e., $\neg(\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha)$. Consequently, any assumption selected to stand in as a replacement instance of the logical form $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ shall equally be logically and thus necessarily false. Throughout this paper I took statement *S* to stand in for the logical form $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$, i.e. ($S \equiv \alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$). The contradictory assumption that I selected to stand in as a replacement instance for the propositional variable *S*, was 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable'. The assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' was considered to be a contradictory statement for reasons I elaborated on and therefore logically and necessarily false under the purview of classical logic.

During the inquiry conducted in this paper, I demonstrated that the contradictory statement 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' cannot be false in a substantive or insubstantive sense. This meant that the contradictory assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' cannot espouse the property of falsehood in a significant or insignificant manner accordingly. The manner in which I demonstrated this is by resorting to a metaphysical and epistemological inquiry which, for the most part, falls under the purview of philosophy of logic and meta-metaphysics. The metaphysical inquiry included two phases. Phase one was focused on logical realism and anti-realism. In this phase I demonstrated how the contradictory assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' could not be considered false in virtue of both logical realism and anti-realism. The upshot of this inquiry was that if the contradictory assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' was considered logically false from the perspective of logical realism and anti-realism it would be at the cost of God's absolute transcendence. Being able to sustain the falsehood that is inferred by the contradictory assumption would have to be at the cost of quantifying and objectifying an absolute ineffable God.

Phase two of the inquiry involved determining how each of these opposing metaphysical approaches to logic are associated with underlying ontological outlooks that motivate substantive and insubstantive accounts of falsehood of statement *S*. The two underlying ontological outlooks that I focused on in this regard were ontological realism and ontological deflationism. I demonstrated that both ontological outlooks ultimately proved problematic in determining a substantive and insubstantive account of falsehood of statement *S*. Both ontological outlooks depicted the nature/reality of what the falsehood of 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' meant in a substantive and insubstantive sense. The ontological perspective of both substantive and insubstantive accounts of the falsehood proved to divest an absolute ineffable God of Islam from His absolute transcendence in different ways. The upshot of this inquiry revealed a deeper perspective as to why such underlying ontological outlooks

are incompatible in determining a substantive and insubstantive account of the falsehood that is inferred by the contradictory assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable'.

The epistemological inquiry involved epistemicism – an epistemological position which is compatible with both ontological realists and ontological anti-realists. Epistemicism infers an indeterminate truth-value to assumptions like 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable'. This meant it was unable to reach a decisive truth-value on the matter of an absolute ineffable God. For that reason, it apparently seemed like a view which is compatible with what I have been trying to establish. That is, the contradictory assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' is not false (or true). However, epistemicism also proved problematic. The problem lies in the very fact that there is a truth-value about the assumption that 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' regardless of whether it is indeterminate. Given that an absolute ineffable God would have a truth-value implies that He exists. God's existence in this case seems to lean towards existence in a univocal sense. Accordingly, this would bring us back to very similar consequences of logical and ontological realism. The upshot of this inquiry revealed that despite resorting to a position like epistemicism which infers an indeterminate truth-value about the assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' it is still incompatible.

What I have drawn on so far has been pivoted on classical logic. It is classical logic which deems contradictions of the form $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$ logically false and thus necessarily false. Yet what if someone were to subscribe to dialetheism – the view that some contradictions are true? Would this circumvent the issue regarding the contradictory assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable'? I believe not. At best dialetheism would consider the contradictory assumption 'the God of Islam is absolutely ineffable' true. The *truth* of the contradiction needn't prompt another investigation to reveal that this truth cannot also be substantive or insubstantive. For the consequences would hardly be any different to the falsehood of the

matter. Thus, being able to retain the absolute transcendence of the God of Islam would mean referring to a truth-value that is neither substantive nor insubstantive since He is beyond any such categories.

References

Ahsan, A. (2017). A Realist Approach in Analytic Theology and the Islamic Tradition. *Philosophy and Theology*, 29(1), pp.101-132.

Beall, J. (2000). Is the observable world consistent?. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 78(1), pp.113-118.

Beall, J. and Logan, S. (2017). *Logic the basics*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

Bennett, K. (2009). Composition, Colocation, and Metaontology. In: D. Chalmers, D. Manley and R. Wasserman, ed., *Metametaphysics New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.38-76.

Burrell, D. (1987). The Unknowability of God in Al-Ghazali. *Rel. Stud.*, 23(02), p.171.

Cohnitz, D. and Luis Estrada-González, L. (2019). *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Edwards, D. (2013). Truth as a Substantive Property. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 91(2), pp.279-294.

Fisher, J. (2008). *On the philosophy of logic*. Australia: Thomson/Wadsworth.

Gäb, S. (2017). The paradox of ineffability. *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 78(3), pp.289-300.

Griffel, F. (2009). *Al-Ghazālī's philosophical theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hick, J. (2000). Ineffability. *Religious Studies*, 36(1), pp.35-46.

Hirsch, E. (2009). Ontology and Alternative Languages. In: D. Chalmers, D. Manley and R. Wasserman, ed., *Metametaphysics New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.231-259.

Kukla, A. (2010). *Ineffability and philosophy*. London: Routledge.

Mou, B. (2009). *Substantive perspectivism*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Olin, D. (2003). *Paradox*. Chesham: Acumen Publishing Limited.

Priest, G. (1999). Perceiving contradictions. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 77(4), pp.439-446.

Rabin, G. (2018). Grounding Orthodoxy and the Layered Conception. In: R. Bliss and G. Priest, ed., *Reality and its Structure Essays in Fundamentality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.37-49.

Renard, J. ed., (2014). *Islamic Theological Themes a primary source reader*. Oakland: University of California Press, pp.109-116.

Resnik, M. (1999). Against Logical Realism. *History and Philosophy of Logic*, 20(3-4), pp.181-194.

Sainsbury, R. (2009). *Paradoxes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sharif, M. M. (ed.) (1963). *A History of Muslim Philosophy: With Short Accounts of Other Disciplines and the Modern Renaissance in Muslim Lands*. Royal Book Co.

Sher, G. (2016). Substantivism about truth. *Philosophy Compass*, 11(12), pp.818-828.

Sider, T. (2011). *Writing the book of the world*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sider, T. (2019). Ontological Realism. In: D. Chalmers, D. Manley and R. Wasserman, ed., *Metametaphysics New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.384-423.

Shehadi, F. (1964). *Ghazali's unique and unknowable God*. Leiden: Brill.

Tahko, T. (2015). *An introduction to metametaphysics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tahko, T. (2019). A survey of logical realism. *Synthese*.

Thomasson A (2009) Answerable and unanswerable questions. In Chalmers D, Manley D, Wasserman R (eds) *Metametaphysics new essays on the foundations of ontology*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 444-471

Weiss, B. ed., (2015). *Dummett on Analytical Philosophy*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.9-83.

PAPER 4

Islamic Contradictory Theology . . . Is there any such thing?

1. Introduction: Laying a Contradictory Groundwork

One of the recent appeals to paraconsistent logics has come from theological contradictions. The characterisation of a contradiction would, according to Grim (2004), depend on how it is categorised. Grim has offered four categories in this respect. These include semantic, syntactic, pragmatic, and ontological. Each category entertains a set of different characterisations of a contradiction[163]. One attempt in capturing the underlying theme of these variations is as follows: "A sentence φ is a contradiction if and only if it is logically impossible that it is true or, equivalently, it is logically necessary that it is false. In other words, no interpretation of φ can be given such that it is a model of φ. A sentence of the form $\Psi \wedge \neg\Psi$ is a contradiction, for instance 'My shirt is red and my shirt is not red.'" (Russo and Williamson, 2010, p. 19). A theological contradiction would follow suit. Any theological statement of the form $\Psi \wedge \neg\Psi$ would entail a contradiction. According to classical logicians, it is impossible for any such theological statement to be true by definition. It must, therefore, be necessarily false. It would be sufficient to consider these statements, in their logical form, as explicit contradictions. As

---

163 See Grim, P. (2004). What is a Contradiction? In: G. Priest, J. Beall and B. Armour-Garb, ed., *The Law of Non-Contradiction New Philosophical Essays*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp.51-55.

opposed to implicit contradictions[164]. Implicit contradictions are more likely to encounter theological resistance by way of '*parameterisation*'[165].

To circumvent this outcome, logicians have resorted to sub-classical systems of logic, namely, paraconsistent logics. Paraconsistent logics can logically tolerate contradictions in a non-explosive way. According to the classical system of logic, every sentence is entailed by a contradiction: $\varphi \wedge \neg\varphi \vdash \Psi$ for any sentence 'φ' and 'Ψ'. This is known as '*ex contradictione sequitur quodlibet*' (from a contradiction, everything follows). More colourfully, it is called the 'principle of explosion'. Conversely, this principle does not hold in paraconsistent logic: $\varphi \wedge \neg\varphi \nvdash \Psi$. This implies that for paraconsistent logics, the law of non-contradiction[166] (henceforth expressed as LNC) does not hold. Paraconsistency can either be expressed as conjunctive or collective[167]: $\varphi \wedge \neg\varphi \nvdash \Psi$ or $\varphi, \neg\varphi \nvdash \Psi$ respectively. Though, both these logical expressions of paraconsistency would depend on how one understands the negation[168].

---

164 Explicit contradictions somehow wear their status—whatever that status might be—on their sleeves. It is sometimes said that contradictions are things it is irrational to accept or to believe, a view that is most plausible when it is only explicit contradictions that are at stake. Implicit contradictions are single statements or pairs which in some way imply, entail, or commit us to explicit contradictions down the line. That something is an implicit contradiction may thus be far from obvious. (Grim in Priest, Beall, and Armour-Garb, 2004, p. 54)

165 "For instance, if one claims that $P(a) \wedge \neg P(a)$, parameterisation holds that one is in effect claiming that $P_1(a) \wedge \neg P_2(a)$ (e.g. elephants are big and not big, because they are big in the context of land animals on Earth, but not big in the context of stars and planets)." (Priest, Graham, Francesco Berto, and Zach Weber, "Dialetheism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/dialetheism/>.)

166 PNC is considered, since Aristotle, as a fundamental principle of logic. The predominance of the PNC has prevailed during all the development of occidental culture and civilization, from Aristotle to modern times. But there also have been people proposing a diametrically opposed viewpoint within this same culture. From Heraclitus to Marx via Hegel some people have sustained that contradiction is essential in reality and/or in thought. Jean-Yves Beziau in Paranormal logics and the theory of bivaluations.

167 See Ripley (2015).

168 See Jean-Yves Beziau Cats that are not cats Towards a natural philosophy of paraconsistency.

It would also depend on a prior understanding of the conjunction and the structural comma[169]. Overlooking the difficulties that arise from these understandings, paraconsistent logics are contradiction tolerant. Therefore, they would allow for theological contradictions.

2. Jc Beall's 'Contradictory Christology'

Construing certain theological contradictions as tolerable, in virtue of a paraconsistent logic, may seem like a plausible move. Yet, it would have a large bearing on the kind of theological contradiction in question. Furthermore, it would require specifying the type of paraconsistent logic one chooses to adopt in tolerating theological contradictions. Both matters are interconnected and integral to what might be called a 'contradictory theology'. A prominent example of this is found in a published symposium by *The Journal of Analytic Theology*. This volume contains an interesting paper by Jc Beall (2019) entitled 'Christ – A Contradiction: A Defense of 'Contradictory Christology'[170]. This is followed by various criticisms and a detailed response to each of these by Beall. Beall sets out to make the case and defend the viability of what he has termed 'Contradictory Christology'. He aims to provide a solution to the fundamental problem of Christology which is consequent upon the dogmatic statements of Chalcedon. This problem expresses an apparent contradiction of Christ. It asserts that Christ is

---

169 There are some serious difficulties that arise once you begin fleshing out these understandings. See Ripley (2015).

170 It is important to note that at the time of writing this paper, Beall had not published his book entitled 'The Contradictory Christ' (Beall, J. (2021). *The contradictory Christ*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.). The book had already been published when I was revising this paper. Considering this, my reference to Beall's book is not any substantial sense. Although, I have renewed *certain* textual quotes from the book. Furthermore, Beall's book builds on substantial parts of material from the symposium previously published in *The Journal of Analytic Theology*. Despite this, he presents new aspects of 'Contradictory Christology'. However, those new aspects are not entirely relevant to my aim in this paper. More importantly, I do not think those new aspects weaken my argument in any direct way. That is because, my argument has very little to do with Beall's defence of 'Contradictory Christology' itself. Instead, my argument is concerned with how the underlying mechanics of 'Contradictory Christology' cannot be extended and applied to a given Islamic theological contradiction. Thus, establishing that there can be no such thing as an Islamic contradictory theology.

both "human (with everything entailed thereby) and Christ is divine (with everything entailed thereby)" (Beall, 2019, p. 400). Subscribing to both natures simultaneously, namely, Christ being divine *and* being human is 'contradiction-entailing'. To obtain a better sense of this contradiction, Beall states that "Being divine entails (among many other of God's properties) being immutable", while "Being human entails (among many other of our essential properties) being mutable" (Beall, 2019, p. 400). Consequently, for Christ to be both mutable and not-mutable is an apparent contradiction. Of course, contradictions of this nature can, and historically have been, defined away by resorting to unconventional meanings. As Beall notes, if the meanings of the terms 'mutable' and/or 'immutable' are taken to mean other than what they are commonly taken to mean in the vernacular, then it would dispel the apparent contradiction. However, as Beall aptly puts it, "the meaning is what it is, and changing the meaning of our terms to avoid the apparent contradiction of Christ is an apparent flight from reality" (Beall, 2019, p. 400).

Beall's solution to this theological contradiction lies in accepting the contradiction at face value. That is to say, the fundamental problem of Christology, namely, "the apparent contradiction of Christ's having two apparently complementary – contradiction-entailing – natures, the divine and the human" (Beall, 2019, p. 401) is indeed logically contradictory (in which explosion is valid). To circumvent this, he appeals to a paraconsistent logic, allowing for a contradictory tolerant take on the matter. Doing so, for Beall, is both motivated and viable. The paraconsistent logic that Beall adopts to demonstrate the viability of 'Contradictory Christology' is First-Degree Entailment (henceforth expressed as FDE) logic.

FDE logic is a versatile system of sub-classical logics[171]. It is inclusive of both paracomplete *and* paraconsistent systems.

> Definition of Paracomplete: *A logical theory is paracomplete if it recognizes a case c such that $c \nvDash_1 A$ and $c \nvDash_0 A$, for some sentence A.* The term 'paracomplete' comes from the Greek word 'para' for *beyond*; the idea being that we're moving beyond having only 'complete cases'. (Beall and Logan, 2017, p. 178)

> Definition of Paraconsistent: *A logical theory is paraconsistent if it recognizes some case c such that $c \vDash_1 A$ and $c \vDash_0 A$, for some A.* The term 'paraconsistent', like 'paracomplete', comes from the Greek word 'para' for *beyond*; the idea now being that we're moving beyond having only 'consistent cases'. (Beall and Logan, 2017, p. 179)

The consequence of being both paracomplete *and* paraconsistent is that it does not impose exhaustion and exclusion (respectively) on its predicates. The classical system of logic, conversely, imposes both exhaustion and exclusion; significantly constraining its interpretive power with respect to its predicates. Imposing exhaustion means that the classical system of logic does not recognise any possible instance in which an object fails to be in *either* extension *or* anti-extension of a predicate. In such cases there is no possible instance in which a predicate fails to be *either* true *or* false of an object. Imposing exclusion means that the classical system of logic does not recognise a possible instance in which an object falls into *both* the extension *and* anti-extension of a predicate. In such cases there is no possible instance in which a predicate is *both* true *and* false of an object. Consequently, the classical system of logic is only

---

171 There are, of course, many other systems of sub-classical logics that are more versatile. For instance, FDE logic does not entertain the `maximum available truth-values'. There are, in fact, a whole range of logics that admit infinitely many truth values.

admitting of cases that are complete and consistent. This eliminates the possibility of entertaining truth-value gaps and gluts – kinds of indeterminate semantic values if you like.

By being paracomplete *and* paraconsistent, FDE logic enjoys gappy and glutty possibilities. These are extended truth-valuations that operate within the scope of logical space. A paracomplete theory can sustain *some* meaningful and declarative statements that are neither true nor false. Statements of this kind are referred to as 'gappy' since they fall into the gap between truth and falsity. A paraconsistent theory can sustain *some* meaningful and declarative statements that are both true and false. Statements of this kind are referred to as 'glutty' since they fall into the intersection of truth and falsity. Moreover, FDE logic is inclusive of, and admits, truth-valuations that are specific to both systems of classical and alternative sub-classical logics. The converse does not hold[172]. Systems of classical and alternative sub-classical logics restrict the space of logical possibilities. They would not be inclusive and admitting of logic's gappy or glutty possibilities; ruling them out as theoretical impossibilities accordingly.

Beall's application of FDE logic to the fundamental problem of Christology thus motivates 'Contradictory Christology'. It does so in virtue of being gappy or glutty. For Beall this is a viable solution. I suspect a type of 'Contradictory Christology' may also prove viable under

---

172

	Logical Theory		Consistent	Complete	Semantic Values
1.	Classical Logic	CL	Yes	Yes	False, true
2.	Strong Kleene	K3	Yes	No	False, neither true nor false, true
3.	Logic of Paradox	LP	No	Yes	False, both true and false, true
4.	First-Degree Entailment	FDE	No	No	False, neither true nor false, both true and false, true

alternative sub-classical systems of logic, such as Strong Kleene and Logic of Paradox. Though, in such cases the theological contradiction in question would be restricted to the combination of truth-valuations that are specific to each of these systems.

The utility of FDE logic to the fundamental problem of Christology seems to possess sufficient (logical) interpretive power in tolerating 'Contradictory Christology'. However, as ground-breaking as 'Contradictory Christology' (as a contradictory theology) may appear, it hinges on agreeing to at least two underlying assumptions. The first (i) is to concede to the fundamental problem of Christology as genuinely contradiction-entailing. The second (ii) is to accept FDE logic as an adequate system of paraconsistent logic that allows for 'Contradictory Christology'. Those who agree to both underlying assumptions would, on the most part, receive Beall's 'Contradictory Christology' as a viable and theoretically amenable solution to the fundamental problem of Christology. This is very different from, as Beall asserts, arguing for and accepting that true Christology is *actually* logically contradictory.

2.1 Moving Beyond 'Contradictory Christology'

That is all well and good. For Beall to have made the case and defended the viability of 'Contradictory Christology', he has accentuated the possibility of introducing contradictory theology, more generally, into the domain of analytic theology. This is somewhat novel. It has managed to attract the attention of logicians, philosophers, and theologians alike. Of course, much of what has been proposed is still in its very early stages[173]. Contradictory theology in

---

173 I acknowledge that Beall (2021) is the first of a two-book series. There are of course other existing works. To note a few:

Beall, J. (2019). Christ – A Contradiction: A Defense of Contradictory Christology. *Journal of Analytic Theology*, 7, pp.400-433.

general requires time to develop, mature, and encounter the full force of its critics before it succeeds in making a notable mark on the theological table. One of the developmental aspects of contradictory theology would include, determining how it is received by other monotheistic traditions, such as Islam and Judaism. This would happen under the pretext of analytic theology[174], where paraconsistent logics would be evaluated and appropriated to properly theological ends. However, this seems like an oversimplification. Beall may have set into motion a type of contradictory theology. This does not mean it is a model that can be replicated and applied under an *a priori* assumption that it will be amenable to other monotheistic traditions. For Beall, *some* contradictions are non-explosive within a given theory does not entail that *all* contradictions are. If we are to subscribe to this idea then, as Beall thinks, we ought to have good evidence for doing so. For Beall, Christian revelation provides such evidence, at least with respect to the sub-field of Christian theology called "Christology". But why should we assume, *a priori*, that something similar will be true for other monotheistic traditions such as Islam?

2.2 Aim of this Paper: Deriving a Possible Islamic Contradictory Theology

Beall, J. and Cotnoir, A. (2017). God of the gaps: a neglected reply to God's stone problem. *Analysis*, 77(4), pp.681–689.

Cotnoir, A. (2017). Theism and Dialetheism. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 96(3), pp.592-609.

Göcke, B. (2016). The Paraconsistent God. In: H. Von, T. Marschler and T. Schärtl, ed., *Rethinking the Concept of a Personal God Classical Theism, Personal Theism, and Alternative Concepts of God*. Münster: Münster Aschendorff Verlag, pp.177-199.

Anderson, J. (2007). *Paradox in Christian Theology: An Analysis of its Presence, Character and Epistemic Status*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster.

174 See Ahsan, A. (2020) Analytic Theology and its Method. Forthcoming in *Philotheos*, 20(2).

I shall consider Beall's 'Contradictory Christology' and application of FDE logic as a tenable solution to the fundamental problem of Christology. It is not my aim to examine both 'Contradictory Christology' and the application of FDE logic to the fundamental problem of Christology. My reference to Beall's defence of 'Contradictory Christology' merely acts as groundwork for a contradictory theology in general. One that has proposedly laid the theoretical foundations for a contradictory theology in virtue of a paraconsistent logic. I am primarily concerned with how Beall's choice of FDE logic for 'Contradictory Christology' is inadequate in tolerating a contradictory theology that is specific to Islam[175]. Yet, my argument is not confined to FDE logic in this regard. A contradictory theology, in general, could prove viable under alternative sub-classical systems of logic, such as Strong Kleene and Logic of Paradox. My argument extents over to these sub-classical systems of logic also. In conclusion, if FDE logic fails in adequately tolerating an Islamic contradictory theology, then *a fortiori*, so do alternative sub-classical systems of logic, such as Strong Kleene and Logic of Paradox. This would establish that there can be no such thing as an Islamic contradictory theology. At least not the kind which replicates Beall's model under an *a priori* assumption that it will be amenable to a given Islamic theological contradiction.

The distinction between Beall's 'Contradictory Christology' and a contradictory theology, in general, is relatively straight forward. By Beall's 'Contradictory Christology', I specifically mean the essential components that motivate, and which he defends the viability of, in solving the fundamental problem of Christology. These components, primarily include the dogmatic statements of Chalcedon and FDE logic. A contradictory theology, in general, is similar in

---

175 I acknowledge that a corollary of my argument may have some bearing on Beall's 'Contradictory Christology'. Beall assumes FDE logic to be the correct account of logic that tolerates 'Contradictory Christology'. My argument is against FDE logic and alternative systems of sub-classical logics in failing to allow an Islamic contradictory theology. This may have drawbacks on what we assume a correct account of logic to be in virtue of a contradictory theology in general. A contradictory theology, in general, would be inclusive of a contradictory Christian theology such as Beall's 'Contradictory Christology'.

principle. Though the scope of the theological contradiction it anticipates solving and the type of sub-classical system of logic it employs, would not be confined to the dogmatic statements of Chalcedon or FDE logic, respectively.

I shall establish my claim by responding to the underlying assumptions of a contradictory theology. I draw these underlying assumptions from Beall's 'Contradictory Christology', namely:

(i) To concede to the fundamental problem of Christology as genuinely contradiction-entailing.

(ii) To accept FDE logic as an adequate system of paraconsistent logic that tolerates 'Contradictory Christology'.

My response shall not focus on 'Contradictory Christology' in any specific sense. Instead, I shall respond to both as underlying assumptions for a contradictory theology that is specific to an Islamic theological contradiction. I shall argue in the negative in both respects. This would include:

(i') A given Islamic theological contradiction does not entail an actual (logical) contradiction.

(ii') FDE logic, including alternative sub-classical systems of logic, are not adequate in tolerating an Islamic theological contradiction.

I shall establish both points in defence of my claim in the course of this paper. Prior to this, I shall present my account of what I take as an Islamic theological contradiction.

3. Islamic Theological Contradiction

Theological contradictions are not uncommon in the Islamic tradition[176]. Such contradictions are explicitly indicative of inconsistent doctrinal beliefs. For the most part, these doctrinal beliefs happen to be fundamental to the believer of Islam. Most of these contradictions appear to stem from the way in which Islamic theologians and philosophers have attempted to make sense of God's relationship with the world and us human beings. Attempting to make sense of theological contradictions, and the inconsistent doctrinal beliefs they give rise to, have inevitably led to espousing different methodological approaches. Some of these methodological approaches have been espoused in trying to explain away theological contradictions. While some have been sought to reconcile between each of the conjuncts that are logically equivalent to the negation of the other[177]. Yet for others, no methodological approach seemed apt enough to grapple with such contradictions in any cognitively satisfying manner. They either conceded to the inconsistent conclusions or chose to suspend judgement and pass over in silence.

The Islamic theological contradiction that I shall focus on stems from the belief in an unknowable and ineffable God. There are instances within medieval Islamic theology which advocate an unknowable and ineffable God. Instances of this peculiar view of God are not very prominent. Yet, they do exist. Proponents of this view range from the early Arab philosopher

---

176 See part three of Kars, A., 2019. *Unsaying God: Negative Theology in Medieval Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Also see Heck, P., 2014. *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion*. Oxon: Routledge.

177 Priest, Berto, and Weber (2018) refer to such moves as '*parameterisation*'. "When one is confronted with a seemingly true contradiction, $A \wedge \neg A$, treat the suspected dialetheia A, or some of its parts, as having different meanings, and hence as ambiguous (maybe just *contextually* ambiguous). For instance, if one claims that $P(a) \wedge \neg P(a)$, parameterisation holds that one is in effect claiming that $P_1(a) \wedge \neg P_2(a)$ (e.g. elephants are big and not big, because they are big in the context of land animals on Earth, but not big in the context of stars and planets)." (Priest, Graham, Francesco Berto, and Zach Weber, "Dialetheism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/dialetheism/>.)

Al-Kindī[178] to the infamous mystic *Ibn al-ʿArabī*[179] with the early *Ismāʿīlīs*[180] and *al-Ghazālī*[181]

situated somewhere in between. I am not suggesting that the intricate details which constitute

---

178 Notice that phrase ''the One in truth.'' This reflects a terminological shift from the third to the fourth section of *On First Philosophy*. Whereas previously al-Kindī spoke only of things that were ''accidentally one'' as opposed to ''essentially one,'' now he contrasts things that are ''one metaphorically [*bi-'l-majāz*]'' to God, who is ''One in truth [*al-wāḥid bi-'l-ḥaqīqa*]'' or the ''true One [*al-wāḥid al-ḥaqq*].'' The meaning, however, is the same: what is ''metaphorically'' one is what is both one and many. The ''true One'' is only one, not at all multiple. In the rest of *On First Philosophy*, al-Kindī will therefore try to specify the sense of ''oneness'' that applies to God. However, he does this largely by enumerating the senses of ''one'' that do not apply to God. For this reason, al-Kindī's treatment of how we speak of God—what one might call ''theological discourse''—is usually thought of as being thoroughly negative. If this is right then in the end all al-Kindī has to say about God is that we can say nothing: He is utterly ineffable, inaccessible to language or thought. I think it would be more accurate to say that al-Kindī, in these final passages, is surveying the senses in which ''one'' might be understood, and narrowing down to the correct sense by a process of elimination. (Adamson, 2007, p. 53-54)

Al-Kindī's one-page description of the "Eternal" [al-Azalī] contains around forty Arabic negative particles. Simply put, God's being the cause [*ʿilla*] of creation makes Her uncaused, ineffable, unknowable, and utterly transcendent. She is the source of all multiplicity; and She is beyond the multiplicity and unity that belongs to creation. As the true One, She cannot be spoken of in the way creation is spoken of. "God, 'the true One,' is completely transcendent, in the precise sense that nothing can be said of Him." (Kars, 2019, p. 78)

Al-Kindī not only negates discursive proofs of the divine essence, but he also closes the door of any non-discursive access to God, including mysticism. God becomes utterly apophatic, inaccessible, and the unknowable ultimate cause and agent. (Kars, 2019, p. 81)

179 In this section devoted to "knowledge of the station of the transcendence of divine unity" [*maʿrifat manzil tanzīhiyya al-tawḥīd*], Ibn al-ʿArabī makes the philosophical argument that God's transcendence entails Her exemption from all possible human definitions, attributions, and traits, including Her very unity. Hence, "*We can say nothing about the word 'unity' when applied to God*." God is made free of any description through the word "unity"; in other words, "oneness" cannot qualify God if God is to be One. Divine unity is like a house that has no door, says Ibn al-ʿArabī; no one can enter this house, but some can merely peek inside via divine unveiling. (Kars, 2019, p. 101)

Ibn al-ʿArabī on Divine Majesty and Beauty:

His essence is exalted above all motions and stillnesses, all bewilderment and mindfulness. It is too high to be overtaken by any explanation, express or implied, just as it is too great to be limited and described. (Ibn al-ʿArabī Translated by Tosun Bayrak and Rabia T. Harris in Renard, 2014, p. 182)

180 For early Ismāʿīlīs, in line with Plotinus (d.270), God was the unknowable absolute One who can be neither comprehended by reason nor accurately described. Their doctrine removed all the attributes, including "being," from God, and unlike the majority of the Muʿtazilites, they kept Her essence utterly unknowable and ineffable. (Kars, 2019, p. 26)

Within this Ismāʿīlī cosmology, Ibn al-Wālid's God is utterly unknowable, far beyond comprehension, limitation, or definition. Discourse [*ʿibāra*] cannot reach anything about Her; anything that can be known or spoken of is created. The Originator is not a body, not a substance, not an accident, not a matter, not a form, not in space, not in time, not comparable to anything, not speakable, and so forth. (Kars, 2019, p. 55)

181 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī most famously had a distinctly negative approach to language concerning God. In the *Highest Aim* [*al- Maqṣad al-Asnā*], al-Ghazālī adopts all the principles of a philosophical apophaticism. The

the very notion of God's unknowability and ineffability for each of the aforementioned theologians and philosophers is homogeneous in any way. It most certainly is not. Nevertheless, I do not anticipate fleshing out those subtle distinctions here. That is not the aim of this paper. However, it is worth mentioning two relevant points that are significant to the purpose of this paper. The first is to merely acknowledge that there *exists* a notion of an unknowable and ineffable God within Islamic theology. Irrespective of how implausible it may seem. The second is to buttress my own view of an unknowable and ineffable God in virtue of offering an *approximate* representation of one of the views of the above-mentioned proponents. I do not anticipate dwelling on this matter beyond both points.

---

unknowability of the divine essence is strongly emphasized, again and again underlining that the highest knowledge concerning God is one's own incapacity to know—docta ignorantia. Not only divine essence but even divine attributes cannot be known to us as much as they relate to the divine essence. We can only imagine divine attributes through comparison with their created counterparts, but their reality is beyond human conception, imagination, and intellection. Contrasting negative and positive language concerning the divine essence, al-Ghazālī finds the former superior. Accordingly, negations contain a latent praise of God more powerful and correct than positively describing Her with qualified attributes:

> Since there is no likeness of Him, none knows His essence other than He. So al-Junayd . . . was right when he remarked: "*none knows God except God.*" For that reason, He gave even His noblest creature a name, with which He veiled Himself, as He said: "Praise the name of your Lord Most High" [Q.87:1]. *So, by God, none knows God except God, in this world, or the next.*

> On his deathbed, Dhū al-Nūn was asked, "What do you long for?" He replied: "That I knew Him before I die—be it for an instant." Now, this confuses the hearts of most of the weak, and leads them to the delusion of negation [*nafy*] and ineffectualism [*taʿṭīl*]. . . . I say: if someone were to say "I do not know God," that would be true. And if they were to say "I know God" that would also be true. . . .

> This would be the case were a person to ask another, "Do you know Abū Bakr, the faithful one?" . . . If one replied, "Who does not know Abū Bakr, or is ignorant about him? Given the visibility, fame, and renown of his name, is it conceivable that anyone in the world doesn't know him? . . ." This reply would be true. . . .

> But if another were asked, "Do you know him [Abū Bakr, the faithful one]," and replied "Who am I to know the faithful one? Alas, far from it! None knows him except himself, or someone who is like him or above him. Who am I to claim to know him or even hope for that? People like me hear his name and attributes, but as for claiming to know him—that is impossible." *This is also true—indeed, this proposition has an aspect, which comes closer to the due glorification and homage.*

In the following discussion, al-Ghazālī gives other examples as well, in order to point out that the negative language is superior to positive language concerning the divine essence. His association of the negative language with praise, and the principle of unknowability, *none knows God except God*, clearly resonate with al- Baṭalyawsī, Maimonides, and the Arabic Aristotle among others. (Kars, 2019, p. 124-125)

228

3.1 The Unknowable and Ineffable God

The unknowable and ineffable God which I shall be referring to during this paper is an *approximate* representation of *al-Ghazālī's* view[182]. For *al-Ghazālī*, as Kars (2019) suggests, the unknowability of God's essence is indicative of our expressive inability. That means the very fact that God's essence is beyond all human categories[183], any articulation of God, whether it be positive or negative, would be contradictory. *Al-Ghazālī* seems to express this contradiction in the following manner:

> If someone were to say "I do not know God," that would be true. And if they were to say "I know God," that would also be true. *Now it is known that negation and affirmation (of the same proposition) cannot both be true*, but rather split truth and falsity. If the negation is true then the affirmation is false, and vice versa. (*al-Ghazālī* in Kars, 2019, p. 162)[184]

---

182 It is worth noting that the sort of unknowability that I am ascribing to the Islamic God is not the kind that is manifested in *Ismāʿīlī* theology. The feature which distinguishes my idea of unknowability from *Ismāʿīlī* theology is that I don't think anything is impossible for an absolute transcendent God while they assume it is. The distinction that I am drawing on can be better appreciated in the extract below:

> From the beginning of their movement in the mid- third/ ninth century, Ismāʿīlī Shīʿites had developed a cosmology that was heavily influenced by a set of Neoplatonic ideas and that interpreted God's divine unity (*tawḥīd*) in a radical way. For Ismāʿīlī philosophers and theologians, *tawḥīd* meant that God is absolutely transcendent and cannot in any way be part of this world. He is beyond being and beyond knowability. God's absolute transcendence makes it impossible that He causes anything in His creation, since that would require some immanence on His part. (Griffel, 2017, p. 219)

183 God does not inhere in anything, and nothing inheres in Him. He is exalted above being contained by space, and too holy to be bounded by time; on the contrary, He existed before He created time and space. He now has [the attributes] by which He was [previously characterized], and is distinguished from His creatures by His attributes. There is not in His essence what is other than He, nor in what is other than He is there [anything of] His essence. He is exalted above change [of state] and movement. Originated things do not inhere [or subsist] in Him, and accidental [events] do not befall Him. Rather, He does not cease; through the qualities of His majesty He is beyond cessation, and through the attributes of His perfection He is independent of [or does not require] any further increase of perfection. (*al-Ghazālī* translated by Watt in Renard, 2014, p. 110)

184 Also see Heck, P., 2014. *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion*. Oxon: Routledge, pp.119.

Al-Ghazālī appears to focus on two contradictory statements *about* God. However, there is a more fundamental issue at stake here. That is the contradiction of unknowability and ineffability of God[185]. Both contradictions are intimately tied together[186]. They can be presented independently as follows:

- The contradiction of unknowability stems from our ability to know an unknowable God. If every truth, including the truth about God's unknowability, is possibly knowable in principle, then it logically follows that every truth (including God's unknowability) is known at some time. This can be formally expressed as: $\forall p \ (p \rightarrow \Diamond Kp) \vdash \forall p \ (p \rightarrow Kp)$. The issue emerges in transitioning from the *possibility* to know every truth $\forall p \ (p \rightarrow \Diamond Kp)$ via logical entailment to *knowing* every truth at some time $\forall p \ (p \rightarrow Kp)$. This includes knowing the truth of an unknowable God.

- The contradiction of ineffability can be presented using the same framework. For the sake of relevance, let us switch the *K* (epistemic operator) with *E* to represent 'is it

---

185 Though, I acknowledge that there are contradictions that ensue from specific beliefs related to the Islamic God Himself. These are not contradictions that ensue from the conjunction of certain beliefs in God and observable phenomena in the world. A notable example would be pertaining to God's essence and attributes, which manifests an unequivocal defiance of the law of non-contradiction. This is articulated in *Nasafī's Māturīdī* Creed as "God has pre-eternal attributes subsisting in His essence. They are not He and nor other than He." (Nasafī's Māturīdī Creed translated by Watt in Reynolds, 2014, p. 114) Focussing on the latter claim of this short excerpt, this article of faith would evidently be deemed false. By standards of classical logic, it would result in a contradiction and thus be ruled out a priori. The logical form of this statement would be represented by way of a double negation as follows: $(\neg F(a) \wedge \neg(\neg F(a)))$. This would read as: object *a* does not have property *F* and nor does it not have property *F*. This logical notation can equally be represented as $(a \wedge \neg a)$ since according to the equivalence relation any instant of a double negation such as $\neg\neg a$ can be replaced by *a* without altering the truth value.

186 Aside from the paradoxical representation of both unknowability and ineffability, there is a distinction to be made between them. Thomas Hofweber (2016) refers to this distinction in the following manner: "Ineffable facts, if there are any, are completely beyond us, unknowable and beyond what we can consider or entertain. Ineffable facts thus can be more hidden from us than merely unknowable ones or merely incomprehensible ones. All ineffable facts are unknowable and incomprehensible, but not the other way round. We will never know whether the number of grains of sand on earth exactly 500 million years ago was odd or even, but we can represent both options. And we might never comprehend or understand why anything exists at all, even though we can easily represent this fact." (Hofweber, 2016, p. 251)

effable that'. In such a case if every truth, including the truth about God's ineffability, is possibly effable in principle, then it logically follows that every truth (including God's ineffability) is effable at some time. This can be formally expressed as: $\forall q\ (p \rightarrow \Diamond Eq) \vdash \forall q\ (q \rightarrow Eq)$. The issue emerges in transitioning from the *possibility* for every truth to be effable $\forall q\ (q \rightarrow \Diamond Eq)$ via logical entailment to every truth being effable at some time $\forall q\ (q \rightarrow Eq)$. This includes the truth being effable about an ineffable God.

The way both these contradictions are tied together is something which *al-Ghazālī* seemed aware of. If, as *al-Ghazālī* holds, we are unable to know God's essence, then we are incapable of expressing anything about Him[187]. Yet, the very view that God is unknowable and ineffable does just that. Although, *al-Ghazālī* may not have articulated the contradiction in this particular manner, he concedes that such issues are direct violations of the LNC. "These paradoxes are *real* rather than mere rhetorical tools or "seeming contradictions"; they do violate the LNC, yet only at the propositional level" (Kars, 2019, p. 163). We thus gain a sense of the radical idea of unknowability and ineffability that I am referring to here. It is the type that needs to be distinguished from weaker forms of ineffability. Weaker forms of ineffability are types that would be open to some form of concession in either defining or explaining away the contradiction[188].

---

187 Given the fact that — "God is a being necessarily existing of Himself (*al-mawjud al-wajib al-wujud bi-dhatihi*)" (*Maqsad* 47, M 342–43), it should be clear that this — "peculiar divine property belongs only to God and only God knows it." Moreover — "it is inconceivable that anyone know it save Him or one who is His like, since He has no like, no other knows it." On such an account, — "only God knows God" (*ibid*.). So the resources of philosophy confirm Godʻs uniqueness or *tawhid*: the utter distinction of the One from all else: — "everything the exercise of which is possible," which does in fact exist from that One — "according to the best ways of order and perfection" (*Maqsad* 47, M 342). (Burrell, 1987, p. 181)

188 I'm thinking of John Hick's idea of ineffability here. See Hick (2000).

3.2 Teasing out the Contradiction

We thus have two claims. The unknowability claim and the ineffability claim[189]. The contradiction in both claims can be teased out as follows:

3.2.1 Unknowability claim:

- p: God is unknowable.

- K: is the epistemic operator, 'it is known (by someone via some means or other at some time) that'

A. $\forall p \, (p \rightarrow \Diamond Kp) \vdash \forall p \, (p \rightarrow Kp)$

B. $(p \wedge \neg Kp) \rightarrow \Diamond K \, (p \wedge \neg Kp)$

C. $\Diamond K \, (p \wedge \neg Kp)$

D. $(p \wedge \neg Kp)$

$(p \wedge \neg Kp)$ stands in for: God is unknowable, and it is not-knowable that God is knowable. On the grounds that $Kp \vdash p$, i.e., knowing p entails the truth of p, we could reformulate the schema as follows: $(Kp \wedge \neg Kp)$. This would read, it is knowable that God is unknowable, and it is not-knowable that God is unknowable. The contradiction is now apparent.

3.2.2 Ineffability claim:

- q: God is ineffable.

---

189 I have formulated both contradictions on Fitch's paradox of knowability. I think it manages to represent both theological contradictions more closely to *al-Ghazālī's* articulation of the paradox. Moreover, it accurately reveals their self-referential nature.

- *E*: it is effable (by someone via some means or other at some time) that'

A'. $\forall q \ (p \rightarrow \Diamond Eq) \vdash \forall q \ (q \rightarrow Eq)$

B'. $(q \wedge \neg Eq) \rightarrow \Diamond E \ (q \wedge \neg Eq)$

C'. $\Diamond E \ (q \wedge \neg Eq)$

D'. $(q \wedge \neg Eq)$

$(q \wedge \neg Eq)$ stands in for: God is ineffable, and it is not-effable that God is ineffable. On the grounds that $Eq \vdash q$, i.e., the effability of q entails the expressibility of q, we could reformulate the schema as follows: $(Eq \wedge \neg Eq)$. This would read, it is effable that God is ineffable, and it is not-effable that God is ineffable. The contradiction is now apparent.

In sum, the contradiction of both the unknowability and the ineffability claims can be appreciated via the following diagram:

$\forall p \ (p \rightarrow \Diamond Kp) \vdash \forall p \ (p \rightarrow Kp)$ $\forall q \ (p \rightarrow \Diamond Eq) \vdash \forall q \ (q \rightarrow Eq)$

$(p \wedge \neg Kp)$ $(q \wedge \neg Eq)$

$(Kp \wedge \neg Kp)$ $(Eq \wedge \neg Eq)$

$\bot$
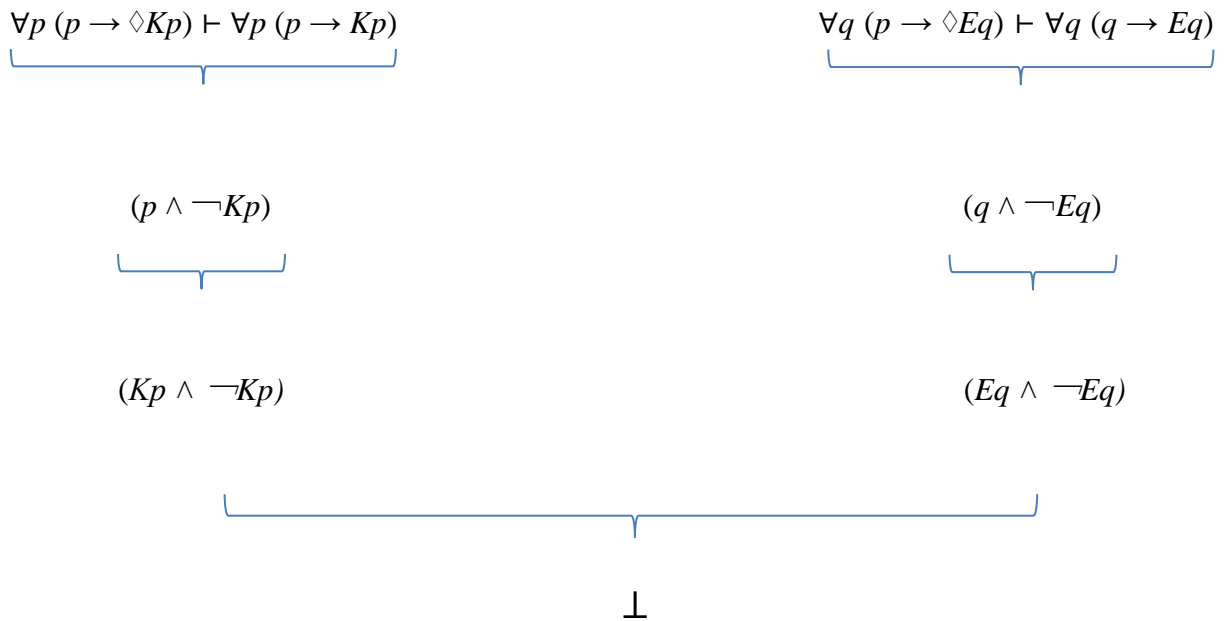
I shall use the following Greek metalinguistic variable to represent the conjunction of both contradictory claims:

$$\beta: (Kp \land \neg Kp) \land (Eq \land \neg Eq)$$

I shall now demonstrate that there cannot be an Islamic contradictory theology, which adequately tolerates β. I shall establish this claim by responding to the underlying assumptions of contradictory theology that are specific to β. These are:

(i'') β does not entail an actual (logical) contradiction.

(ii'') FDE logic, including alternative sub-classical systems of logic, are not adequate in tolerating β.

Let us take each of these in turn.

4. (i′′) β does not entail an actual (logical) contradiction.

β ostensibly expresses an apparent contradiction. By standards of the classical system of logic, it would be logically impossible for β to be true – equivalently implying that that it is necessarily false. In this instance, an Islamic contradictory theologian, may resort to a paraconsistent logic. The move to a paraconsistent logic would be under the assumption that there is good revelationary evidence that supports it. Resorting to a paraconsistent logic should *not* be a default move when faced with an apparent contradiction. There ought to be substantial evidence in which the contradictory theologian can fall back on. It is clear in the case of Christology why the Christian contradictory theologian might want to resort to a paraconsistent logic. That is because many contradictions centre on the two natures of Christ. Let us assume that there are similar reasons for the Islamic contradictory theologian in resorting to a paraconsistent logic. A paraconsistent logic, in principle, would tolerate β. The way it does so

would depend on the type of paraconsistent logic that is adopted. According to Strong Kleene logic β would be neither true nor false (gappy) only. According to Logic of Paradox β would be both true and false (glutty) only. According to FDE logic β would be neither-true-nor-false or both-true-and-false (gappy or glutty respectively).

Suppose that the Islamic contradictory theologian *believes* β. She does so on the ground that β is a consequence of God's absolute transcendence. By absolute transcendence I mean beyond the limits of expressions of thought[190]. Thus, God's unknowability and ineffability is in virtue of God being beyond the limits of expressions of thought. Considering this, β would be upheld by the Islamic contradictory theologian as a genuine belief. We needn't concern ourselves with the exact nature of the belief-state. Nevertheless, the way in which the truth-value of β is considered, in virtue of any one of the sub-classical systems of logic, would determine the metaphysical and semantic nature of β. In turn that would provide some insight into the nature of how the belief-state is understood. Depending on which truth theory one subscribes to, it would determine the kind of meaning one associates to β. This would have a significant bearing on how β is ultimately understood.

There are at least two broad alternatives in this respect. On the one hand, the truth-value of β would fall under, what we might call, 'philosophically conventional' theories of truth. This would include 'traditional' truth-theories and 'non-traditional' truth-theories. Subscribing to traditional truth-theories would involve subscribing to a given truth-theory that falls within the

---

190 See my forthcoming paper entitled 'Islamic Mystical Dialetheism Resolving the Paradox of God's Unknowability and Ineffability'. Also see:

Ahsan, A. (2020) The logical inconsistency in making sense of an ineffable God of Islam. *Philotheos*, 20(1), pp.68-116.

Ahsan, A. (2020) God Beyond the Boundary-Stones of Thought. *American Journal of Islam and Society*, 37 (3-4), pp.50-97.

Ahsan, A. (2019) The Paradox of an Absolute Ineffable God of Islam. *Philotheos*, 19(2), pp.227-259.

categories of substantive accounts of truth. Subscribing to non-traditional truth-theories would involve subscribing to a given truth-theory that falls within the categories of insubstantive accounts of truth. On the other hand, the truth-value of β would not fall under any 'philosophically conventional' theories of truth. It would be considered beyond all formal categories of truth[191]. Let us take these in turn.

4.1 Commitment to philosophically conventional theories of truth

Suppose the Islamic contradictory theologian was to consider the truth-value of β by way of subscribing to any given truth-theory that falls under philosophically conventional theories of truth. Moreover, the contradiction that β entails would be logically tolerated in virtue of adopting any one of the sub-classical systems of logic. However, the respective truth-value assigned to β would divest God of His absolute transcendence[192]. The way it would do so, would depend on the specific truth-theory that is adopted. It would suffice to demonstrate this point by broadly referring to substantive and insubstantive accounts of truth. Both these categories of truth offer very different accounts of truth in virtue of being a property of either propositions, statements, or beliefs. We can think of substantive and insubstantive accounts with respect to how the property of truth is upheld. According to a substantive account, truth is a significant property, while according to the insubstantive account, truth is not a significant property. This distinction is reflective of their metaphysical (or grounding if you prefer) and semantic statuses. In this sense, a substantive account is metaphysically significant while an

---

191 I am referring to a rejection of the most basic condition of any given formal theory of truth. For instance, Tarski's notable *Convention T*, which involves the schema (T). This condition, for Tarski, was the fundamental condition for any truth-theory that entailed sentences of the form: (T) *X* is true if and only if *p*.

192 I have demonstrated this claim in Ahsan, A. (2021) 'Beyond the categories of truth'. *Axiomathes*. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10516-021-09581-4

insubstantive account is metaphysically vacuous/trivial[193]. The difference between both categories of truth is no doubt stark. Nonetheless, the notion of truth offered by both categories is seemingly meaningful and declarative – albeit in very different ways.

If the contradiction that β entails is tolerated by way of truth-valuations that are either substantive or insubstantive, it would impose a metaphysical and semantic constraint, respectively, on how we understand (or make sense of) β. The metaphysical and semantic constraints would thus confine our understanding of β to certain conceptual parameters and the scope in which these operate. Irrespective of the specific truth-theory that is adopted, it would infer that β is meaningful and declarative. To qualify for being meaningful and declarative would thus come at the cost of divesting God of His absolute transcendence. Paradoxically then, the very grounds upon which the Islamic contradictory theologian believes β, namely God's absolute transcendence, is compromised. In conclusion, resorting to one of the sub-classical systems of logic may prove *logically* sufficient in tolerating the contradiction that β entails. However, a mere logical move in tolerating the contradiction in question is inadequate. Especially, when that logical move compromises the underlying motivation for believing β.

4.2 Non-commitment to philosophically conventional theories of truth

Suppose the Islamic contradictory theologian was to consider the truth-value of β by way of rejecting all commitment to philosophically conventional theories of truth. The 'truth-value' assigned to β is upheld, say in a mystical sense[194]. The particulars and nature of this mystical notion of truth need not concern us here. The point would suffice in appreciating that it is a

---

193 You could consider inflationary and deflationary types of truth theories as types of theories that are metaphysically significance and metaphysically vacuous/trivial respectively.

194 See Ahsan, A. Islamic Mystical Dialetheism Resolving the Paradox of God's Unknowability and Ineffability forthcoming.

type that lies beyond all formal categories of truth. More importantly, it is the type that does not consider truth to be meaningful and declarative. That is, truth is not meaningful and declarative in the way it is conceived of under philosophically conventional theories of truth. That is the kind that imposes metaphysical and semantic constraints. Consequently, the truth-value of β would have to transcend logical space. My use of the phrase 'logical space' has been taken from Wittgenstein[195]. We can obtain a lucid idea of what Wittgenstein meant by the term 'logical space'. Even though he never defined it. Aranyosi (2013) expresses this idea as follows,

> Wittgenstein, who introduced the phrase to philosophy in the *Tractatus*, never defines logical space, yet we get a clear and intuitive idea of what it is supposed to be, namely, the space of all possibilities. If that is true, then we are immediately pushed to explain what possibilities are and what it means to say that logical space is the space of *all* possibilities. Traditionally, it is propositions that are taken as bearers of the modal properties of possibility, necessity, impossibility and contingency, and these modal notions are in turn explained by appeal to truth at a possible world. Logical space, then, is, according to current orthodoxy, a space of possible worlds, and possibilities are propositions true at some possible world, hence, belonging to logical space. Impossibilities will be propositions that are not true at any possible world; hence, they are not in logical space. Contingencies will be propositions that are possible but false

195 The notion of "logical space" was first introduced by Wittgenstein during his stay in Krakow in autumn 1914 while he was serving in the Austrian army. The considerations that finally led to the idea of an abstract space whose internal structure represents all the logic that underlies our ordinary language are well preserved in the first two wartime notebooks (MS 101, MS 102). They belong to a rapidly developing series of ideas which also includes an early version of the picture theory of proposition. They form an important part of the preliminary

work for the *Tractatus*, the first draft of which – the so-called *Prototractatus* (preserved in MS 104) – Wittgenstein started to write down some time later in summer 1915. (, p. 15-16)

at some worlds. Necessities will be propositions that are true at all possible worlds. (Aranyosi, 2013, p. 9)

In virtue of the above characterisation, if β is picked out within the space that logic recognises as possible (being the widest space of possibilities), then it would be subject to modal properties. Being philosophically susceptible to the modal properties, as expressed by Aranyosi, would be admitting a philosophically conventional truth-value to β. This would then collapse back into the former option. To evade this issue, the Islamic contradictory theologian would have to concede that philosophically conventional truth-valuations cannot be assigned to β. For the Christian contradictory theologian, such as Beall, this issue does not arise. Since, "In theology the space of possibilities is restricted to those (logical) possibilities that obey the truths about God" (Beall, 2021, p. 26). According to this, truths about God are those that are restricted within the space of logical possibilities. That is because, just as the logical space of possibilities obeys the truths about God, those truths would also have to obey (fall within the scope of) logical possibilities. It is not plausible for a theology that is restricted to the logical space of possibilities to entertain truths about God that are beyond it. Resultantly, this is not a viable option for the Islamic contradictory theologian who believes β on the ground that it is a consequence of God's absolute transcendence. The kind which transcends the logical space of possibilities.

4.3 Logical Truths

The same point needs to be made from a logical truth (and falsehood) perspective. There is much philosophical controversy surrounding the characterisation of logical truths. There are at least two main candidates that seek to characterise logical truths by way of distinguishing them from other truths, such as those grounded in metaphysics or semantics. The first of these

candidates distinguishes logical truths from other truths via a modal force. The second of these candidates distinguishes logical truths from other truths via a formality. I shall concern myself with the latter since it appears to be slightly dominant with respect to its rival. One clear definition of logical truths via formality is Quine's. He states "A *logical truth,* then, is definable *as a sentence from which we get only truths when we substitute sentences for its simple sentences*" (Quine, 1986, p. 50). Let us unpack this a little.

- A logical truth is a formula that is true under all interpretations, irrespective of the semantic values its constituent expressions receive. Consequently, all substitution instances that are logically true are logical truths.

- A logical falsehood is a formula that is false under all interpretations, irrespective of the semantic values its constituent expressions receive. Consequently, all substitution instances that are logically false are logical falsehoods.

Under the discussion of validity, Haack (1978) has made a distinction between syntactic and semantic validity. Syntactic validity can be expressed as: $A_1 \dots A_{n-1} \vdash_L A_n$. Semantic validity can be expressed as: $A_1 \dots A_{n-1} \vDash_L A_n$. Haack equates syntactic validity to 'theoremhood' and sematic validity to 'logical truth'.

- *A* is valid-in-L (is a *theorem* of L) just in case *A* follows from the axioms of L, if any, by the rules of inference of L ($\vdash_L A$).

- *A* is valid-in-L (is a *logical truth* of L) just in case *A* is true in all interpretations of L ($\vDash_L A$).

The former of these reflects proof theory, by way of which the concept of logical consequence is established (proof theoretic consequence). This is centred on deducibility. The latter of these reflects model theory, by way of which the concept of logical consequence is established

(model theoretic consequence). This is centred on truth and interpretation. We can characterise a model theoretic consequence as follows:

- Let Δ be a set of formulas of a formal system S and let γ be a formula of S. The following then "γ is a model theoretic consequence of Δ in S" is expressed as: $\Delta \leq_s \gamma$. This reads as: $\Delta \leq_s \gamma$ if every one of S's models that assigns true to each member of Δ also assigns true to γ.

The truth of γ is guaranteed within the scope of a formal system S whose every member of Δ is true. However, if the system of logic is altered, say from the classical system of logic to a given sub-classical system of logic, it would shift the parameters as to what qualifies as logical truth. In such a case, what qualifies as a logical truth for the adherent of the classical system of logic would differ to what qualifies as a logical truth for the adherent of a given sub-classical system of logic, namely a paraconsistent logic. We need not get into how certain logical truths are translated under each of these systems, namely, classical, and sub-classical logics. That is because there is a more fundamental matter at stake here.

In one respect, it makes little difference as to whether logical truth is characterised in virtue of modality or formality. In a similar sense, it does not matter if the parameters of logical truth may shift according to different systems of logic. The very fact that truth-valuations *are* assigned is sufficient to say that they must be meaningful and declarative within that system. To appreciate the consequence of this, recall that *β* is contradiction-entailing. This contradiction is not tolerated under the classical system of logic, and it is tolerated under paraconsistent logics. According to the classical system of logic, *β* would be necessarily false, according to Strong Kleene it would be gappy only, according to Logic of Paradox it would be glutty only, and according to FDE logic it would be gappy or glutty. In each case, the contradiction entailed by *β* is considered a *contradiction*. Of course, the way in which the

contradiction is dealt with is very different. Nevertheless, in each case, truth-valuations are being assigned to β. These truth-valuations must be meaningful and declarative. Being meaningful and declarative is intrinsic to admitting truth-valuations. This is where the underlying problem resides for the Islamic contradictory theologian.

As I have established, for β to admit any philosophically conventional theories of truth would compromise the underlying motivation for believing β. Thus, β cannot be meaningful and declarative. Again, for the Christian contradictory theologian, such as Beall, this would not be an issue. Beall suggest that,

> The first virtue is that the familiar truth and falsity conditions are maintained, as above. There is no revision of the truth or falsity conditions; there is instead a more complete and explicit account – and that's all. In this way the 'meanings' of the standard logical vocabulary remain as per the standard (classical-logic) account; it's just that the standard account is properly seen for what it has always been: namely, a restricted account. (Beall, 2021, p. 35)

For Beall, the truth and falsity conditions cannot be shifted. This may prove a viable position for the Christian contradictory theologian. Nevertheless, this is a peripheral issue for the Islamic contradictory theologian. The debate for her seems to evolve around more foundational matters. This involves, the way in which β is considered contradictory, and the way it is dealt with. Given the theological nature of β, in principle, the Islamic contradictory theologian cannot *actually* consider it a contradiction. Let alone adopting a paraconsistent logic to tolerate it.

5. (ii″) FDE logic, including alternative sub-classical systems of logic, are not adequate in tolerating β.

It is evident by now that the Islamic theological contradiction is very different from the contradiction entailed in the fundamental problem of Christology. What separates both these theological contradictions is not merely confined to the different concepts of God. Though, that is indeed a fundamental distinguishing feature. Nevertheless, in the context of a contradictory theology, in general, the distinction between different concepts of God extend to their amenability to sub-classical systems of logic. A contradictory theologian, in general, would thus explore which paraconsistent logic would prove viable in tolerating a given theological contradiction. If the theological contradiction concerns God in some way, then her exploration of a given paraconsistent logic would presuppose its amenability with the God in question. Beall's 'Contradictory Christology' is a notable example. The very fact that the contradiction entailing from the fundamental problem of Christology can be tolerated via FDE logic, suggests that the Christian God is amenable to a sub-classical system of logic. In fact, Beall not only thinks that resorting to FDE logic is a viable solution to the fundamental problem of Christology, but also assumes FDE logic to be the correct account of logic for the present purposes[196].

Appealing to FDE logic may prove to be *logically* viable in tolerating 'Contradictory Christology'. Although it would principally depend on the nature of Christ that one is willing to accept. As things currently stand, Beall's 'Contradictory Christology' would imply (implicitly at least) that the nature of Christ in question is amenable to gappy or glutty truth-valuations. This means that the nature of Christ is accepting of truth-value gaps or gluts that are in some way meaningful and declarative. Exactly how Beall, or any other Christian contradictory theologian, would go about making theological sense of this (in line with the Christian tradition), beyond the logical expression, is an important question.

---

196 …for present purposes, shall only assume that FDE is the correct account of logic . . . (Beall, 2019, 408)

Things are very different for the Islamic contradictory theologian. The absolute transcendence of God would not allow for β to be amenably expressed via FDE logic. To establish this point, referring to FDE logic seems like a good option. This is because it is a proper part of the sub-classical system of logic, namely of paraconsistent logics. This makes it inclusive of the classical system of logic, Strong Kleene logic, and Logic of Paradox. Therefore, demonstrating that β is not amenable to FDE logic would *a fortiori*, demonstrate that it is not amenable with the alternative sub-classical systems of logic also. By extension this would establish that a contradictory theology, in general, is not amenable with β. I shall present my case from two interrelated perspectives. These include truth and falsity conditions, and logical consequence. In the former perspective I shall offer a sense of how the semantic values[197] of FDE logic are problematic for β. In the latter perspective I shall offer a sense of how the syntactical nature of FDE logic is problematic for β. Let us take each of these in turn.

5.1 Semantic values of FDE logic

FDE logic is inclusive of both paracomplete and paraconsistent theories. This allows it to offer four possible semantic values. Let us express these as follows:

I. t = true {1}

II. b = both true and false {0,1}

III. f = false {0}

IV. n = neither true nor false {}

---

197 I am using 'semantic values' as opposed to 'truth-valuations' here. The reason for this is, by 'semantic values' I am thinking of the actual meaningful import we may be able to derive from assigned truth-valuations. While my use of 'truth-valuations' is a mere assigning of truth-values.

Under the classical system of logic, an interpretation is a function from formulas to truth-valuations 1 and 0. This is expressed as $v(\beta) = 1$ or 0. The underlying assumption in this case is that every formula is confined to either t or f. Under FDE logic this assumption is discarded. In this case, the interpretation will not serve as a function. Instead, it will be considered as a relation between formulas and truth-valuations[198].

This formula will thus bear a relation, expressed as ρ, between propositional parameters and the following truth-valuations: t, f, b, or n. Let us illustrate how these four semantic values would be expressed in virtue of β.

    I'. $v(\beta) = t$ *iff* $\beta\rho1$ but not $\beta\rho0$

    II'. $v(\beta) = b$ *iff* $\beta\rho1$ and $\beta\rho0$

    III'. $v(\beta) = f$ *iff* $\beta\rho0$ but not $\beta\rho1$

    IV'. $v(\beta) = n$ *iff* neither $\beta\rho1$ nor $\beta\rho0$

Consequently,

    V'. $\beta\rho1$ *iff* $v(\beta) = t$ or $v(\beta) = b$, and

    VI'. $\beta\rho0$ *iff* $v(\beta) = f$ or $v(\beta) = b$.

We can derive partial truth-valuations in virtue of Strong Kleene logic and Logic of Paradox as follows.

Strong Kleene logic (accepting gaps):

---

198 Note that it is now very important to distinguish between being false in an interpretation and not being true in it. (There is, of course, no difference in the classical case.) The fact that a formula is false (relates to 0) does not mean that it is untrue (it may also relate to 1). And the fact that it is untrue (does not relate to 1) does not mean that it is false (it may not relate to 0 either). (Priest, 2008, p. 143)

I''. $v(\beta) = t$ iff $\beta\rho1$ but not $\beta\rho0$

II''. $v(\beta) = f$ iff $\beta\rho0$ but not $\beta\rho1$

III''. $v(\beta) = n$ iff neither $\beta\rho1$ nor $\beta\rho0$

Logic of Paradox (accepting gluts):

I'''. $v(\beta) = t$ iff $\beta\rho1$ but not $\beta\rho0$

II'''. $v(\beta) = b$ iff $\beta\rho1$ and $\beta\rho0$

III'''. $v(\beta) = f$ iff $\beta\rho0$ but not $\beta\rho1$

The two which concern a contradictory theology, in general, are gaps (unsettled statements) and gluts (over determined statements). Both are meaningful and declarative in some way. Let us assume that the Islamic contradictory theologian adopts any one of the above paraconsistent logics to tolerate the contradiction entailed by β. The interpretative power offered by each of these logics would draw a relation between the formula β and the respective truth-valuations. Drawing this relation, would assume that the respective interpretations (in virtue of gaps or gluts) allow for a meaningful semantic import. This would prove problematic for the Islamic contradictory theologian. If the interpretative power of these paraconsistent logics is admitting a particular meaning/sense that is derivable once a relation is made between formula β and the respective truth-valuations, then the grounds upon which β is upheld cannot be absolutely transcendent. Therefore, if β cannot be amenable to FDE logic, then *a fortiori*, nor can it be amenable to Strong Kleene logic and Logic of Paradox.

5.2 Syntactical nature of FDE

When speaking about any logic, we must have a clear idea of logical consequence. Logical consequence is what makes logic, *logical*, so-to-say. There is much philosophical controversy

surrounding the exact characterisation and nature of logical consequence[199]. Differences in how logical consequence is understood has a direct bearing on how logic is posited by logical monists, pluralists, and nihilists. Here is one characterisation of logical consequence[200]:

> Logical consequence is the relation that obtains between premises and conclusion(s) in a *valid argument*. Validity, most will agree, is a virtue of an argument, but what sort of virtue? Orthodoxy has it that an argument is valid if it must be the case that when the premises are true, the conclusion is true. Alternatively, that it is impossible for the premises to be true and the conclusion false simultaneously. In short, the argument is *necessarily truth preserving*. (Caret and Hjortland, 2015, p. 3)

A valid argument is necessarily truth preserving given that there is a logical consequence relation between its premises and conclusion. Thus, when a sentence is true in all models, we can say it is logically true.

- A is a logical consequence of a set of premises Γ ($\Gamma \vDash A$) if and only if, for every model M: whenever every $B \in \Gamma$ is true in M, A is also true in M[201].

Beall offers the following characterisation of logical consequence:

---

199 See Caret, C. and Hjortland, O. ed. (2015). *Foundations of Logical Consequence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

200 Logical consequence is a relation among claims (sentences, statements, propositions) expressed in a language. An account of logical consequence is an account of what follows from what—of what claims follow from what claims (in a given language, whether it is formal or natural). An account of logical consequence yields a way of *evaluating* the connections between a series of claims—or, more specifically, of evaluating *arguments*. (Beall and Restall, 2006, p. 3)

201 Equivalently, we can think of the logical consequence with a *no counter model* definition: $\Gamma \vDash A$ if and only if there is no (counter-)model M such that every $B \in \Gamma$ is true in M, but A is false in M. (Caret and Hjortland, 2015, p. 4)

Let *X* be a set of sentences, and *p* any sentence. Then *X* logically entails *p* (i.e., *p* is a logical consequence of *X*) if and only if there is no possibility in which everything in *X* is true but *p* is untrue. (A counterexample is a possibility in which everything in *X* is true but *p* untrue.) (Beall, 2019, p. 406)

This characterisation is a bi-conditional statement. It can be expressed in the form P ↔ Q. It is evident from this statement that the consequence precedes the antecedent. Despite this, the truth of the consequent is conditional upon the truth of its antecedent. This means that if P is true then Q is true. In the antecedent, the definition of the term 'possibility' plays an essential role. Depending on how this term is defined, would determine how we ought to understand Beall's characterisation of logical consequence. Resultantly, this would determine the truth of the consequent and subsequently the bi-conditional as a whole. Beall clarifies the contextual meaning of the term 'possibility' and its scope in different domains. He says that "Here, 'possibility' picks out whatever logic recognizes as possible. While there is ongoing debate about which possibilities are logical possibilities (i.e., recognized by logic's entailment relation) …" (Beall, 2019, p. 406). Beall appreciates the ongoing philosophical controversy surrounding exactly which possibilities count as logical possibilities. Despite this, he seems to gloss over the intricate debate on this matter by stating that,

"… one matter is settled: logic plays its universal, foundational role in our theories by recognizing the widest space of possibilities. In physical theory, the space of possibilities is restricted to those (logical) possibilities that obey physical laws. In arithmetic the space of possibilities is restricted to those (logical) possibilities that obey the laws of arithmetic. In theology the space of possibilities is restricted to those (logical) possibilities that obey the truths about God." (Beall, 2019, p. 406)

This would prove problematic for the Islamic contradictory theologian for the reason I have already stated above. On a different note, if logic is considered universal and foundational in virtue of the widest space of possibilities, it would imply that logic is normative. Let me unpack this claim. If logic recognises the widest space of possibilities that is inclusive of a physical theory, arithmetic, and even theology, then it is most certainly universal and foundational to these domains at the very least. This would mean, a given characterisation of logical consequence relation would have consequences for how we *ought* to reason within these domains[202]. However, the normativity of logic would not be a favourable position for the contradictory theologian who adopts FDE logic. This is because the logical consequence relation would end in an incoherent pluralism. To demonstrate this point let us take two Islamic contradictory theologians. Let us refer to them as *x* and *y*. Both *x* and *y* adopt a different paraconsistent logic in tolerating the contradiction entailed in *β*.

- *x* adopts Strong Kleene logic (accepting gaps): $v(\beta) = n$ *iff* neither $\beta\rho1$ nor $\beta\rho0$

- *y* adopts Logic of Paradox (accepting gluts): $v(\beta) = b$ *iff* $\beta\rho1$ and $\beta\rho0$

What is valid for *x* is not valid for *y* and vice versa. However, as I have noted previously, the Islamic contradictory theologian who adopts FDE logic would consider both as valid forms. That is because FDE logic is a proper part of the classical system of logic, Strong Kleene logic, and Logic of Paradox[203]. Beall, on this point, states that,

> What the FDE account does *not* do is reject any classical logic models. The account accepts all classical logic models as genuine models (as representations of possibilities

---

202 See Russell, G., 2017. Logic isn't normative. *Inquiry*, 63(3-4), pp.371-388.

203 Let *X* be any set of *L* sentences, and *A* any sentence of *L*.

Fact: if $X \vdash_{FDE} A$ then $X \vdash_{CL} A$, $X \vdash_{K3} A$, and $X \vdash_{LP} A$ (Beall and Logan, 2017, p. 187)

that logic recognizes); the account simply *expands* the space of models to recognize ones that go beyond the narrow confines of the classical logic space. (Beall, 2019, p. 411)

Logical pluralists, such as Beall and Restall (2006) go to great lengths in building a case for their view. Nevertheless, what is considered logically valid in Strong Kleene logic would prescribe how we ought to reason about β. While what is considered logically valid in Logic of Paradox would also prescribe how we ought to reason about β[204]. This reasoning would occur within the logical space of possibilities respective to each system of logic. And it would be inclusive of β. Exactly how the Islamic contradictory theologian who adopts FDE logic is to decide which of her counterparts' (*x* and *y*) reasoning is correct would be problematic. That is because according to the Islamic contradictory theologian who adopts FDE logic, both paraconsistent logics adopted by *x* and *y* are valid in their reasoning about β. However, the issue for the Islamic contradictory theologian should not be the discrepancy between the validity and logical space of possibilities of both logics with respect to β. Rather, the fundamental issue is that β falls within the logical space of possibilities of these logics. The fact that the validity of β is being determined within a logical space of possibilities is where the issue lies[205].

Overlooking this issue, the Islamic contradictory theologian may refer to FDE logic's expansive utility in tolerating the contradiction entailed by β. She may choose to focus on the fact that FDE logic bears an advantage over the classical system of logic and sub-classical

---

204 See Kellen, N. (2020). The normative problem for logical pluralism. *Inquiry*, 63(3-4), pp.258-281.

205 On a standard conception, even God is subject to the laws of logic, His omnipotence dulled by the logical impossibility of creating a Rock So Heavy He Himself Cannot Lift It. Even devout theists seem to think that it is not God, but logic, that is the final arbiter of what is possible and what is not. And yet, humble pluralism suggests that when reckoning with impossibly heavy rocks, maybe God should not take Himself to be limited to classical logic. (Weber, 2017, p. 110)

systems of logic, namely, Strong Kleene logic, and Logic of Paradox. FDE logic tolerates incomplete and inconsistent cases that '*expands* the space of models' beyond the confines of the classical system of logic[206]. In cases like these we may instead (cautiously) choose to say that FDE logic *rejects* the constraints of the classical system of logic in very specific contradictory cases that are considered true. Such as in the case of 'Contradictory Christology'. However, the Islamic contradictory theologian should be cautious. Exactly how she decides which contradictory case is genuine (true), and ought to be tolerated via FDE logic, from those that are not genuine (false), and ought to be left to alternative systems of logic requires serious deliberation.

I appreciate Beall's take on how 'Contradictory Christology' is not encouraging theologians to actively seek contradictions '*willy nilly*'. He states that "The reason that we generally reject all logical contradictions is that true ones are ultimately few and far between. And this is why so few of our true theories are contradictory (i.e., negation-inconsistent)" (Beall, 2019, p. 416). However, this hardly seems like a satisfactory justification for admitting *some* contradictions as genuine (true). Being 'few and far between' is a vague condition that needn't be confined to theological contradictions at all. If it is admitted that *some* contradictions are genuine (true) exclusively on theological grounds, then it would beg further questions. For instance, would *all* these theological contradictions that are 'few and far between' be genuine (true). More importantly, exactly how would a contradictory theologian, distinguish between those rare logical contradictions that are genuine (true) from those that are not. Settling the matter by referring to theology hardly seems like a promising resolve.

---

206 FDE thus broadens the space of cases acknowledged by the other theories: it broadens the LP [Logic of Paradox] space of cases by the admission of incomplete [paracomplete] cases; it broadens the K3 [Strong Kleene] space of cases by the admission of inconsistent [paraconsistent] cases; and it broadens the CL [Classical Logic] space of cases in both of these ways (Beall and Logan, 2017, p. 179).

Nevertheless, FDE logic does not *categorically* reject the classical system of logic. To appreciate this, consider the majority cases in which FDE logic *rejects* logical contradictions, against the exceptional cases in which it *accepts* them as genuine (true). This offers an approximate sense of the proportion (albeit one that is vague) between contradictions that FDE logic may not tolerate in the classical system of logic, against those which it may tolerate in the sub-classical systems of logic. In line with Beall's claim, there are majority cases in which logical contradictions are rejected. Consequently, FDE logics' commitment to the classical system of logic would be far greater than those exceptional cases in which it would be committed to the sub-classical systems of logic. Although, FDE logic can expand its space of logical possibilities, and go beyond the confines of the classical system of logic, it would only do so in exceptional cases where it accepts contradictions as non-explosive.

I concede that for Beall 'Contradictory Christology' is one of those exceptional cases in which FDE logic would tolerate the fundamental problem of Christology as genuine (true). Irrespective of this, the fact that FDE logic can shift its theoretical commitment from majority cases, in which it is committed to the classical system of logic, to exceptional cases, in which its committed to sub-classical systems of logic, seems problematic. The problem has implications on the case it chooses to tolerate. Allow me to demonstrate this point.

Being committed to the classical system of logic in majority cases would imply that FDE logic posits the laws of that system as genuine laws that govern it[207]. The law that I shall focus on is

---

207 Classical logic contains all of the following theorems and rules of inference:

> Double Negation: $A \leftrightarrow (\sim \sim A)$
> Excluded Middle: $(A \lor \sim A)$
> Non-Contradiction: $\sim (A \land \sim A)$
> DeMorgan's Laws: $\sim (A \land B) \leftrightarrow (\sim A \lor \sim B)$, $\sim (A \lor B) \leftrightarrow (\sim A \land \sim B)$
> Explosion: $(B \land \sim B) \rightarrow A$
> Monotonicity: If Δ entails A, then Δ, Φ entails A.

LNC ($\neg$(A $\land$ $\neg$A). Since FDE logic is committed to the classical system of logic in *majority* cases, it would be committed to positing the LNC in virtue of those cases. And since FDE logic is committed to the sub-classical systems of logic in *exceptional* cases, it would not *categorically* reject, positing the LNC in those cases. Instead, in such cases, it would expand the logical space of its possibilities in virtue of a paracomplete and paraconsistent theory. Consequently, it would *neither* impose exhaustion *nor* exclusion (respectively) on its predicate[208]. Exhaustion represents the law of excluded middle (henceforth expressed as LEM) (A $\lor$ $\neg$A). Not imposing exhaustion would thus mean there is an exceptional case (possible instance) in which a predicate fails to be *either* true *or* false of an object. Exclusion represents the principle of explosion ((B $\land$ $\neg$B) $\rightarrow$A). Not imposing exclusion would thus mean there is an exceptional case (possible instance) in which a predicate is *both* true *and* false of an object.

In both cases of neither imposing exhaustion nor exclusion, the LEM and the LNC is being rejected – albeit in exceptional cases. This is true. The positing of both laws is being rejected. However, it is not being rejected *categorically*. A categorical rejection (*) in positing both laws could mean a variety of things depending on how the laws themselves are understood. In broad terms it could mean, one of at least three things:

(a*)   Inherently rejecting the laws in-and-of-themselves.

(b*)   Universally rejecting their application in all cases.

(c*)   Universally rejecting the consequence of the laws in all cases.

---

208 A case is a structure $\langle D, \delta \rangle$ where D is the domain and δ provides denotations of all names, and provides extensions and antiextensions to all predicates. If Π is a predicate, we write ε_Π^+ for its extension and ε_Π^- for its antiextension. . . we stipulate also that all objects of the domain (of any case) have a name in our language.
In the formal theory, exclusion and exhaustion can be stated concisely as follows:
Exhaustion. For any *n*-ary predicate Π, $\varepsilon_\Pi^+ \cup \varepsilon_\Pi^- = D^n$.
Exclusion. For any predicate Π, $\varepsilon_\Pi^+ \cap \varepsilon_\Pi^- = \emptyset$.
(Beall and Logan, 2017, p. 203-204)

Although the meanings of (b*) and (c*) seem to be in line with what FDE logic endorses, it does not do so universally and in all cases. That is a crucial point. The rejection in positing the LEM and the LNC is exclusively confined to exceptional cases only. It would not be a universal rejection in positing both laws in all cases. Therefore, it would *not* be, what I have termed a 'categorical rejection'.

A rejection in positing both laws in exceptional cases (**) could mean, one of at least three things:

(a**)   Inherently rejecting the laws in-and-of-themselves.

(b**)   Rejecting their application in exceptional cases.

(c**)   Rejecting the consequence of the laws in exceptional cases.

It appears that the most plausible way to understand this rejection is (c^{**}). This is a rejection of the consequences of these laws. It does not seem plausible to say that the rejection of these laws in exceptional cases is (a^{**}). That is an inherent rejection of the laws in-and-of-themselves. If it were an inherent rejection of the laws in-and-of-themselves, then the rejection would equate to a categorical rejection. Inherently rejecting any one or both laws in-and-of-themselves would amount to rejecting their 'existence' so-to-say. Rejecting the existence of these laws would mean rejecting their existence *universally* and in all cases. It would prove incoherent in arbitrarily accepting the existence of these laws in some cases while rejecting them in others. This can be appreciated specifically with the LNC. If FDE logic were to inherently reject the LNC in-and-of-itself, then it could not be admitting of any system of logic, classical and/or sub-classical.

Furthermore, it is not plausible to say that the rejection of these laws in exceptional cases is (b^{**}). That is a rejection of their application. Universally admitting the existence of these laws

yet rejecting their application in exceptional cases would beg the question as to whether the existence of these laws is being rejected in those specific cases. This question would seem legitimate under the presumption that these underlying laws are universally applicable in all cases. It would prove incoherent in arbitrarily accepting the application of these laws in some cases while rejecting them in others. With respect to the LNC, FDE logic applies this law to *all* cases while going on to reject the consequence of this law in *exceptional* cases. The consequence of the LNC is the principle of explosion. FDE logic cannot outrightly reject (nor outrightly accept) positing the principle of explosion (as invalid or valid respectively) prior to having applied the LNC.

FDE logic then, does not reject positing the LNC in-and-of-itself, and nor does it reject its application. It posits and applies it *universally*. FDE logic's rejection in positing the LNC is (c^{**}). That is a rejection of the consequences in exceptional cases. The consequence of the LNC is the principle of explosion. Therefore, FDE logic rejects positing the principle of explosion in exceptional cases only. More importantly, I do not think that a rejection in positing the principle of explosion is in fact a rejection in positing the LNC in-and-of-itself – particularly in the case of FDE logic. We gain a sense of both points in virtue of Beall's 'Contradictory Christology' in the following excerpt:

> The core notion of non-contradiction at issue for Contradictory Christology is a version that is directly incompatible with Contradictory Christology. This version of non-contradiction, on which I henceforth take the current objection to focus, is sometimes called '*ex contradictione quodlibet*' or, with more flair, 'explosion' (the latter colorfully indicating that a jot of negation inconsistency explodes a theory into the absurd trivial theory, which is the theory that contains all sentences of the language of the theory):
>
> $A, \neg A \vdash B$

where *A* and *B* are any sentences of the given language, and ⊢ is logical consequence (and, hence, is part of *every* consequence relation involved in any of our theories). In what follows I shall take the objection to concern this 'law' – better described as a 'rule' – of non-contradiction: namely, that arbitrary *A* together with its logical negation ¬*A* (and, hence, by logic, the contradiction *A* ∧ ¬*A*) logically entails *B*. Contradictory Christology rejects this 'law', and must do so on pain of a simply absurd Christology – the trivial Christology. (Beall, 2019, p. 427)

Beall refers to the notion of non-contradiction in virtue of its (logical) consequence, namely, explosion. He rejects the LNC from this perspective, in order to tolerate 'Contradictory Christology'. This does not mean Beall rejects the LNC in-and-of-itself. Nor does he reject its application. If the rejection in positing the principle of explosion was considered a rejection in positing the LNC in-and-of-itself, then the rejection of the principle of explosion would have worked against the very reason *why* it was being rejected, namely, to tolerate the viability of 'Contradictory Christology'. In this case the rejection in positing the principle of explosion would have equated to the rejection in positing the truth of the LNC in-and-of-itself. This would make its application vacuous to any contradictory matter, let alone tolerating it by way of rejecting its consequence.

6. Final Remarks

FDE logic universally posits the LNC in-and-of-itself and applies it. These are common features that unites it with the system of classical and alternative sub-classical systems of logic (making it a proper part of them). It would follow from this that these systems of logic universally accept the metaphysical implications of the LNC. These metaphysical implications

would be ones that cannot be independent of the LNC in virtue of itself and its application[209].

The contradictory theologian may respond to this in two possible ways. Firstly, she may endorse the neutrality of logic. In this case, she would stand opposed to logic admitting to any metaphysical implications. Secondly, she may consider a given theological contradiction as a mere semantic contradiction. In this case the theological contradiction need not have a bearing on reality. I have responded to both these views elsewhere[210] and shall not reiterate them here.

Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning Beall's take on both these matters. His view on the topic-neutrality of logic is as follows:

> Logic itself does not say anything peculiar about knowledge claims, arithmetical claims, modal claims or theological claims; logic ignores the specific subject matter of those sorts of claims (be it knowledge, arithmetic, modality, or God) and treats them as it treats claims about any subject matter whatsoever. In this way, logic is said to be 'universal' and 'topic-neutral'. (Beall, 2021, p. 24)

His view on the theological contradiction, namely 'Contradictory Christology' is as follows:

> In the end, when the truth is laid bare, Christ may be the unique contradictory being in reality. That's for future discovery to tell. For now, Contradictory Christology, as I advance it, affirms the apparently contradictory orthodox Christology as genuinely contradictory. It is true that Christ is mutable; it is false that Christ is mutable. (Beall, 2021, p. 9)

---

209 See Priest, G. (2019). Metaphysics and Logic: an Observation in Metametaphysics. *Giornale di Metaphysica*, 41(1), pp.68-77.

210 For responses to the first view see Ahsan, A. (2020) The logical inconsistency in making sense of an ineffable God of Islam. *Philotheos*, 20(1), pp.68-116.

For responses to the second view see My forthcoming paper entitled 'Islamic Mystical Dialetheism Resolving the Paradox of God's Unknowability and Ineffability'.

Further on he states,

> My principal claim is not that Christ is the unique contradictory being; the claim is that Christ – the GodMan – is the source of contradictory beings. So, even if all Christians wind up as derivatively contradictory beings – deriving their contradictory-being status from their various relations to Christ – the principal claim remains true (and, I note, duly conservative with respect to the source of contradictory beings). (Beall, 2021, p. 104)

I shall not directly respond to Beall's take on both these matters. As I made it clear from the outset of this paper, it is not my aim to examine 'Contradictory Christology'. For the Christian contradictory theologian, Beall's take on both these matters may be amenable with the Christian God in question. My reference to Beall's view on each of these matters is to tease out some of the underlying assumptions that constitute a contradictory theology in general. A contradictory theology, in general, would be inclusive of an Islamic contradictory theology. Thus, I shall respond to these matters by encouraging the Islamic contradictory theologian to consider a broader question. One that, not only draws on what I have already covered during this paper, but also helps provide an Islamic theological context to the above matters. This question is: 'what should the role of logic be in Islamic theology?' This is a fundamental question. Yet also an extremely broad one. Despite the extensive intricacies inherent in this question, it is a prescriptive one that stems from the view that logic is not normative[211]. In

---

211 See: Russell, G. (2017). Logic isn't normative. *Inquiry*, 63(3-4), pp.371-388.

Cotnoir, A. (2019). On the Role of Logic in Analytic Theology: Exploring the Wider Context of Beall's Philosophy of Logic. *Journal of Analytic Theology*, 7, pp.508-528.

Cotnoir, A. (2018). Logical Nihilism. In: J. Wyatt, N. Pedersen and N. Kellen, ed., *Pluralisms in Truth and Logic*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.301-329.

relation to this, I shall confine myself to two general remarks, which I hope shall lay the ground for future exploration. Both shall be brief and in virtue of an Islamic contradictory theologian who happens to believe in β on the grounds that it is a consequence of God's absolute transcendence. The first of these relates to two views on how logic might be conceived. The second of these relates to how, if so, does formal language accurately and completely characterise β?

A. J. Cotnoir (2019) has drawn on both these matters. With regards to the first he has provided the following two views on how logic might be conceived.

Exceptionalism: Logic is special! It is analytic and always known apriori.

The main idea behind exceptionalism is that basic logical laws and inferences are valid because they are analytic. They are thought to be the result of stipulating the rules of certain concepts (the 'logical' ones e.g. negation, conjunction, etc.). Such stipulations implicitly define their concept and hence are constitutive of the *meaning* of the concept itself. Basic logical laws and inferences are also such that anyone who understands the basic logical concepts knows *a priori* that they are valid. Anyone who purports to disagree with a logical inference is simply confused (e.g. they must not mean *negation* when they say 'not'). As a result, logical inferences aren't revisable or subject to scrutiny; no empirical evidence or religious doctrine could ever call them into question.

Anti-Exceptionalism: Logic isn't special! It isn't analytic, and isn't always known apriori.

Russell, G. (2018). Varieties of Logical Consequence by Their Resistance to Logical Nihilism. In: J. Wyatt, N. Pedersen and N. Kellen, ed., *Pluralisms in Truth and Logic*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.331-361.

According to anti-exceptionalism, basic logical laws and inferences are not generally stipulations or constitutive rules governing concepts. One can perfectly well understand the meaning of logical concepts whilst rejecting some of the purported 'rules' that govern its use. Basic logical laws and inferences are not typically justified *a priori*; the methods of logic are continuous with theoretical methods in science and elsewhere. As a result logic is subject to revision on the basis of abductive considerations like simplicity, explanatory power, unification, fruitfulness, non-adhocness, and fit with evidence. "Logic is in principle no less open to revision than quantum mechanics or the theory of relativity." (Quine 1986, 100) (Cotnoir, 2019, p. 510)

The Islamic contradictory theologian would need to decide which conception of logic best expresses her believe of β. That is, of course, if any formal system of logic can do so without imposing its internal commitments on β. If a given system of logic imposes certain internal commitments that lead to compromising God's absolute transcendence, then under the Anti-Exceptionalism view, we need to recognise those commitments and revise them accordingly. But what if, no prospective revision can accommodate β without compromising the grounds upon which it is believed? On this view, logic would be open to revision much like theoretical methods in science and elsewhere. However, what if no possible amount of revision proves amenable enough in expressing β without compromising God's absolute transcendence? Perhaps one of these reasons lies in logic's limits of modelling. This brings us to the second remark.

For logic to make advancements in being able to determine valid consequence relations it proposes certain structures. These structures serve as *models*[212] which seek to map-out given

---

212 There are a range of details that need to be specified when proposing a model. First, we need to carefully specify both what object *x* is being proposed *as a model* and what object *y* we will be using *x* as a *model of*. We call the thing being modeled the *target system* of the model, and we call the object *x* a *model of* the target system.

instances of consequence relations that are situated in natural language (i.e. the *target system* of our models). The method by which this is achieved involves specifying a *modelling hypothesis*[213]. The modelling hypothesis proposes[214] an isomorphism[215] between the *target system* and the *model*. To illustrate this, take Beall's and Logan's (2017) example of Watson and Crick's model of the DNA molecule[216]. Watson and Crick's modelling hypothesis offered an isomorphism between the *target system* of their model (which was a 'tin-and-cardboard double-helical structure') and the *model of* the DNA molecule. This isomorphism was in virtue of the *shape* of both structures, namely, the target system and the model. The similarity between the two structures offered by the isomorphism is so both structures maintain precisely the same formal features (a homomorphism[217]). In this sense it is not offering an actual replica of the

---

After specifying these, we still need to specify the exact way in which *x* is being seen as similar to *y*. These assumptions – the assumptions that *x* is similar to *y* in *these particular ways* – are called *modeling hypotheses.* (Beall and Logan, 2017, p. 14)

213 To do this, of course, we must specify the *target system* of our models – the parts of natural language whose logical consequence relation we are attempting to model, as well as the *modeling hypotheses* – the particular aspects of the natural language relation of logical consequence that we are supposing are similar to the relations we highlight in our models. (Beall and Logan, 2017, p. 15)

214 The modelling hypothesis has limitations as A.J. Cotnoir (2019) has highlighted.

215 An isomorphism is a homomorphism between two structures that is also bijective. In other words, if there is an isomorphism between two structures, then they have exactly the same formal features. (Cook, 2009, p. 161)

216 Beall and Logan (2017) provide the following example:

> let's look at a well-known example of modeling from the sciences: Watson and Crick's production of an actual tin-and-cardboard double-helical structure as a model of the DNA molecule. The *target system* of their model was the DNA molecule. The tin-and-cardboard structure they build was their *model of* the DNA molecule. And, finally, their modelling hypothesis was that the *shape* of the two structures were generally similar. Importantly, the tin-and-cardboard structure was different in many ways from an actual DNA molecule. In particular, as Ronald Giere has amusingly observed, Watson and Crick were *not* proposing that their model was similar to an actual DNA molecule in the sense that both were composed of tin and cardboard. (Beall and Logan, 2017, p. 14-15)

217 A homomorphism between two structures is a function f from one structure to the other (plus a correlation between functions or relations on the first structure and functions and relations on the second structure) such that the function f is structure-preserving. In other words, if f is a homomorphism between two structures, then, for any relation R on the first structure, and the corresponding relation S on the second structure, we have: $R(x, y)$ if and only if $S(f(x), f(y))$ and, for any binary function g on the first structure and corresponding function h on the second structure, we have: $f(g(x, y)) = h(f(x), f(y))$. (Cook, 2009, p. 139)

DNA molecule in any ontological sense. At most, it is an *approximate* representation of how we can maintain and express a formal function *f* between the two given structures.

There are some serious limitations to modelling[218]. Cotnoir (2019) highlights two limitations. The first is that modelling proceeds by abstraction. In any given phenomena only specific aspects of it are intended to be modelled. This relieves the modelling process from incorporating the entirety of aspects that constitute the phenomena in question. Thus, the resulting model would always retain a level of incompleteness. The second is that models are idealisations. Following on from the first limitation, there shall always be certain aspects of a given phenomenon that are discarded. Reasons for this may involve tightening the scope of what is being modelled to avoid compromising precision. Nevertheless, this process may allow for unintended artefacts which are false or inaccurate. This needn't render the model itself as incorrect.

The implications of both these limitations would have a significant bearing on logically expressing the viability of *β*. The Islamic contradictory theologian would need to consider the theoretical wedge between adopting a given system of logic and its modelling capability to express an absolute transcendent God. A subsequent implication that the Islamic contradictory theologian would need to consider is, as Cotnoir (2019) states,

> Similarities are symmetric: if *x* is similar to *y* in some respect, then *y* is similar to *x* in the same respect. As a result, the presumption of structural similarity requires that the mathematical structure and the target phenomena *have the relevant properties in the same way*. That is, not only is the model like the phenomena, but the phenomena is like the model. In the case of theology, this assumption runs up against a problem. Not

---

218 See Glanzberg, M. (2015). Logical Consequence and Natural Language. In: C. Caret and O. Hjortland, ed., *Foundations of Logical Consequence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.71-120.

everyone believes that God can share substantive properties with creatures; many theologians from across the tradition have thought that predicating any creaturely property of God will fail to be *univocal*. So when we say that God is good, we mean something akin to human goodness; or when we say God is wise, we don't mean human wisdom, but a kind of wisdom that is appropriate to God's own being. (Traditionally in theology this have been referred to as '*analogical* predication'. From the perspective of contemporary cognitive science and linguistics, however, *analogical* predication and reasoning are largely rooted in a form of structure mapping much like modelling, and is based on presupposed similarity. (Cotnoir, 2019, p. 522)

In sum of these remarks, the Islamic contradictory theologian may reconsider her approach. This would primarily involve revisiting the fundamental question, 'what should the role of logic be in Islamic theology?' I hope these remarks, and the issues I have highlighted throughout this paper, lay the ground for future work in exploring this question.

7. Objections and Replies

Objection: Most, if not all, of what I have proposed hinges on the Islamic theological contradiction, namely *β*. This theological contradiction is expressive of an extremely radical notion of an Islamic God. Most Islamic theologians and philosophers would entirely reject this view. Others would express a deep-seated reservation and/or a profound scepticism in accepting it. According to both groups of theologians and philosophers, subscribing to this position would be a stark misrepresentation within, what one might call, 'Islamic theology'. Moreover, it would hardly serve to be a productive view that allows getting off the ground. This is because, it is evident that an absolute transcendent God is insusceptible to both systems of classical and sub-classical logics. My paper demonstrates this in both of its main sections.

Therefore, resorting to any of the systems of classical and sub-classical logics as a viable solution to β is simply misplaced.

A follow up question would be, what if a less radical notion of an Islamic God were upheld? In such a case, could an Islamic contradictory theology be a viable solution?

Reply: I concede that the Islamic theological contradiction which I have chosen to work with is expressive of an extremely radical notion of an Islamic God. Moreover, it is the kind that would, on the most part I suppose, be considered overly esoteric and even illusive according to majority of Islamic theologians and philosophers alike. In fact, many have already balked at my choice of God in an attempt for me to reconsider. However, my selection of this extremely radical notion of an Islamic God is not without deliberation. Moreover, much of what I have drawn on is certainly not without purpose. I shall like to make two points in this regard.

The first of these points concerns those (Islamic) theologians and philosophers who would demand that my radical notion of an Islamic God needs to be grounded in the Islamic theological tradition. Otherwise, my radical notion of an Islamic God would not, in essence, be considered a 'recognised (Islamic) theological position' – whatever that might mean. There are two responses to this. The first has to do with the radical notion of an Islamic God that I have selected. The second has to do with an Islamic contradictory theology. Firstly, my view of God is grounded in the Islamic theological tradition. I have mentioned proponents of this view and provided references to where their respective views can be found[219]. Secondly, what I have argued against in this paper is not intended to be a normative account. An Islamic contradictory theology is by no stretch of the imagination normative in both its constituting disciplines of theology and logic. The apparent theological contradiction, whatever it might be, must be

---

219 See footnotes: 15, 16, 17, and 18.

accepted as contradiction-entailing. The logic adopted would be a sub-classical system of logic, namely a paraconsistent logic. Both features are not exactly normative. To demand that I ground an Islamic contradictory theology, in instances of (medieval) Islamic theological traditions – be it in the *Kalāmic* tradition, or an Islamic theological school, or a specific thinker, would appear to be redundant. That is because a contradictory theology, in general, has come about with the advent of contemporary logical systems. It does not have any apparent parallels with medieval Islamic theology or even medieval Islamic logic for that matter.

The second of these points concerns the primary reason for my choice of the Islamic theological contradiction that is expressive of β. Belief in β is on the grounds that it is a consequence of God's absolute transcendence. This notion of God that I have selected is intended to be one that is inclusive of versions that are less radical. Allow me to explain. If this notion of an Islamic God is extremely radical on a given spectrum of unknowability and ineffability then, as I have demonstrated, it is insusceptible to the ordinary categories of substantive and insubstantive accounts of truth and systems of classical and sub-classical logics. The notion of God which is expressive of an extreme form of radical ineffability would thus resist both theoretical notions of truth and logic that I have drawn on throughout this paper. Respectively, if the radicalness of the unknowability and ineffability of God on this spectrum was reduced by the slightest, then it would, in some sense, make the notion of God susceptible to a theoretical notion of truth and a system of logic. We needn't dwell on what kind of notion of God this would amount to, or even how or in what sense it would prove receptive to a theoretical notion of truth and a system of logic. It suffices to acknowledge that an extremely radical notion of an Islamic God captures most, if not all, of the *less* radical versions of an Islamic God – whatever those may be. Thus, my choice of a radical notion of an Islamic God would *a fortiori* be inclusive of less radical versions of an Islamic God.

I do not expect all Islamic contradictory theologians to agree with my position. It was never my intention to convince them all. Nevertheless, I hope what I have drawn on, succeeds in prompting Islamic theologians, philosophers, and logicians, in being able to cogitate beyond the confines of conventional logical space. I hope it encourages Islamic (contradictory) theologians, philosophers, and logicians, who seem to be in awe over Beall's Christian contradictory theology model, to confidently think beyond it. Overly admiring a novel and fascinating move, such as 'Contradictory Christology', may eventually find its way into alternative monotheistic traditions such as Islam. I doubt replicating Beall's model, without seriously deliberating over the implications it would have on Islamic theology, would be an act of making a unique mark on the theological table. It is hardly commendable in seeking to offer a contemporary perspective of what might be called 'Islamic contradictory theology' under the pretext of 'Contradictory Christology'. This may be championed by those who either fail to appreciate, or choose to ignore, the intricate dissimilarities between two very different notions of God. Likewise, it may be endorsed by those who are desperately driven to articulate a viable solution to Islamic theological contradictions with the appeal to paraconsistent logics.

Objection: To uphold β without compromising the grounds upon which it is believed, namely, God's absolute transcendence, I proposed a non-commitment to philosophically conventional theories of truth. This move seems motived by the view that an absolute transcendent God cannot be confined to the logical space of possibilities. Thus, β cannot be evaluated according to the truth-valuations that set the boundaries of both systems of classical and sub-classical logics. Instead, 'truths' about God lie beyond the logical space of possibilities. In such a case, I referred to a 'truth-value' being assigned to β, perhaps in a mystical sense. But haven't I simply *extended* logical space by making that move? How would a non-commitment to philosophically conventional theories of truth be independent from a truth-value in at least

some sense? And whatever that sense of truth-value is, would it not just be an move from of one logical space of possibilities to another?

Reply: The point is not to dwell on the particulars and nature of a non-commitment to philosophically conventional theories of truth in virtue of *β*. This is not to evade the question. For those interested in what a non-commitment to formal categories of truth, in virtue of an absolute transcendent God may look like, should refer to my forthcoming paper entitled 'Islamic Mystical Dialetheism Resolving the Paradox of God's Unknowability and Ineffability'. It would suffice to say that moving beyond the logical space of possibilities is, in this sense, a non-commitment to formal categories of truth. The kind which seeks to avoid any form of philosophical theorising of an absolute transcendent God. The result of this, is not an expansion of logical space that carries over the same philosophical definitions. Under these circumstances, truth-valuations about an absolute transcendent God would not be   meaningful and declarative in virtue of philosophically conventional theories of truth. Rather, they will be independent of all philosophical constraints.

8. Conclusion: Islamic Contradictory Theology . . . There's no such thing.

I have made the case that there cannot be an Islamic contradictory theology. At least not the kind which replicates Beall's model under an *a priori* assumption that it will be amenable to a given Islamic theological contradiction. I have done so by referring to Beall's defence of 'Contradictory Christology' as groundwork for a contradictory theology in general. I have offered two points to establish my claim. The first is that an Islamic theological contradiction does not entail an actual (logical) contradiction. The second is that FDE logic, including alternative sub-classical systems of logic, are not adequate in tolerating an Islamic theological

contradiction. In sum of these points, there is no such thing as an Islamic contradictory theology.

References

Adamson, P. (2007). *Al-Kindī*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ahsan, A. (2017). A Realist Approach in Analytic Theology and the Islamic Tradition. *Philosophy and Theology*, 29(1), pp.101-132.

Ahsan, A. (2018). The Classical Correspondence Theory of Truth and the God of Islam. *Philosophy and Theology*, 30(2), pp.273-294.

Ahsan, A. (2019) Quine's Ontology and the Islamic Tradition. *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 36(2), pp.20-63.

Ahsan, A. (2019) The Paradox of an Absolute Ineffable God of Islam. *Philotheos*, 19(2), pp.227-259.

Ahsan, A. (2020) God Beyond the Boundary-Stones of Thought. *American Journal of Islam and Society*, 37 (3-4), pp.50-97.

Ahsan, A. (2020) The logical inconsistency in making sense of an ineffable God of Islam. *Philotheos*, 20(1), pp.68-116.

Ahsan, A. (2020) Analytic Theology and its Method. Forthcoming in *Philotheos*, 20(2).

Ahsan, A. (2021) 'Beyond the categories of truth'. *Axiomathes*. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10516-021-09581-4

Ahsan, A. Islamic Mystical Dialetheism Resolving the Paradox of God's Unknowability and Ineffability. Forthcoming.

Anderson, J. (2007). *Paradox in Christian Theology: An Analysis of its Presence, Character and Epistemic Status*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster.

Aranyosi, I. (2013). *God, Mind, And Logical Space A Revisionary Approach To Divinity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bayrak, T. and Harris, R. (2014). Ibn al-ʿArabī on Divine Majesty and Beauty. In: J. Renard, ed., *Islamic Theological Themes a primary source reader*. California: University of California Press, pp.181-186.

Beall, J. (2019). Christ – A Contradiction: A Defense of 'Contradictory Christology'. *Journal of Analytic Theology*, 7(1), p.400-439.

Beall, J. (2021). *The contradictory Christ*. 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Beall, J. and Cotnoir, A. (2017). God of the gaps: a neglected reply to God's stone problem. Analysis, 77(4), pp.681–689.

Beall, J. and Logan, S. (2017). *Logic The Basics*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Routledge.

Beall, J. and Restall, G. (2006). *Logical Pluralism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Berto, F. (2007). *How to sell a contradiction The Logic and Metaphysics of Inconsistency*. London: College Publications.

Burrell, D. (1987). The Unknowability of God in Al-Ghazali. *Religious Studies*, 23(2), pp.171-182.

Cohnitz, D. and Estrada-González, L. (2019). *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cotnoir, A. (2017). Theism and Dialetheism. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 96(3), pp.592-609.

Cotnoir, A. (2018). Logical Nihilism. In: J. Wyatt, N. Pedersen and N. Kellen, ed., *Pluralisms in Truth and Logic*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.301-329.

Cotnoir, A. (2019). On the Role of Logic in Analytic Theology: Exploring the Wider Context of Beall's Philosophy of Logic. *Journal of Analytic Theology*, 7, pp.508-528.

Fisher, J. (2008). *On the philosophy of logic*. USA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Gäb, S. (2017). The paradox of ineffability. *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 78(3), pp.289-300.

Ghazālī's Ashʿarī Creed Translated by Watt, W. (2014). In: J. Renard, ed., *Islamic Theological Themes a primary source reader*. California: University of California Press, pp.109-113.

Glanzberg, M. (2015). Logical Consequence and Natural Language. In: C. Caret and O. Hjortland, ed., *Foundations of Logical Consequence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.71-120.

Göcke, B. (2016). The Paraconsistent God. In: H. Von, T. Marschler and T. Schärtl, ed., *Rethinking the Concept of a Personal God Classical Theism, Personal Theism, and Alternative Concepts of God*. Münster: Münster Aschendorff Verlag, pp.177-199.

Griffel, F. (2017). *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grim, P. (2004). What is a Contradiction? In: G. Priest, J. Beall and B. Armour-Garb, ed., *The Law of Non-Contradiction New Philosophical Essays*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp.49-72.

Haack, S. (1978). *Philosophy of logics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Heck, P. (2014). *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion*. Oxon: Routledge.

Hick, J. (2000). Ineffability. *Religious Studies*, 36(1), pp.35-46.

Hofweber, T. (2016). *Ontology and the ambitions of metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hofweber, T. (2017). Are There Ineffable Aspects of Reality?. In: K. Bennett and D. Zimmerman, ed., *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics Volume 10*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.124-170.

Jacquette, D. (2010). *Logic and how it gets that way*. Durham: Acumen Publishing Limited.

Jean-Yves Beziau Cats that are not cats Towards a natural philosophy of paraconsistency.

Jean-Yves Beziau in Paranormal logics and the theory of bivaluations.

Kars, A. (2019). *Unsaying God: Negative Theology in Medieval Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kellen, N. (2020). The normative problem for logical pluralism. *Inquiry*, 63(3-4), pp.258-281.

Nasafī's Māturīdī Creed Translated by Watt, W. (2014). In: J. Renard, ed., *Islamic Theological Themes a primary source reader*. California: University of California Press, pp.113-116.

Pilch, M. (2017). The Structure of Wittgenstein's Logical Space. *Wittgenstein-Studien*, 8(1).

Priest, G. (2008). *An Introduction to Non-Classical Logic From If to Is*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Priest, G. (2019). Metaphysics and Logic: an Observation in Metametaphysics. *Giornale di Metaphysica*, 41(1), pp.68-77.

Priest, Graham, Francesco Berto, and Zach Weber, "Dialetheism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/dialetheism/>.)

Quine, W. (1986). *Philosophy of Logic*. 2nd ed. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Ripley, D. (2015). Paraconsistent Logic. *Journal of Philosophical Logic*, 44(6), pp.771-780.

Russell, G. (2017). Logic isn't normative. *Inquiry*, 63(3-4), pp.371-388.

Russell, G. (2018). Varieties of Logical Consequence by Their Resistance to Logical Nihilism. In: J. Wyatt, N. Pedersen and N. Kellen, ed., *Pluralisms in Truth and Logic*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.331-361.

Russo, F. and Williamson, J. (2010). *Key terms in logic*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

See Grim, P. (2004). What is a Contradiction? In: G. Priest, J. Beall and B. Armour-Garb, ed., *The Law of Non-Contradiction New Philosophical Essays*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp.51-55.

Slater, B. (1995). Paraconsistent logics?. *Journal of Philosophical Logic*, 24(4), pp.451-454.

Tahko, T. (2014). The metaphysical interpretation of logical truth. In: P. Rush, ed., *The Metaphysics of Logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.233-248.

Weber, Z. (2017). A Guide to Logical Pluralism For Non-Logicians. *Think*, 16(47), pp.93-114.

Islamic Mystical Dialetheism: Resolving the Paradox of God's Unknowability and Ineffability

1. Introduction

Theological contradictions are not uncommon in the Islamic tradition[220]. Such contradictions are explicitly indicative of inconsistent doctrinal beliefs. For the most part, these doctrinal beliefs happen to be fundamental to the believer of Islam. Most of these contradictions appear to stem from the way in which Islamic theologians and philosophers have attempted to make sense of God's relationship with the world and us human beings. Attempting to make sense of theological contradictions, and the inconsistent doctrinal beliefs they give rise to, have inevitably led to espousing different methodological approaches. Some of these methodological approaches have been espoused in trying to explain away theological contradictions. While some have been sought to reconcile between each of the conjuncts that are logically equivalent to the negation of the other[221]. Yet for others, no methodological approach seemed apt enough to grapple with such contradictions in any cognitively satisfying

---

[220] See part three of Kars, A., 2019. *Unsaying God: Negative Theology in Medieval Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Also see Heck, P., 2014. *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion*. Oxon: Routledge.

[221] Priest, Berto, and Weber (2018) refer to such moves as '*parameterisation*'. "When one is confronted with a seemingly true contradiction, A ∧ ¬A, treat the suspected dialetheia A, or some of its parts, as having different meanings, and hence as ambiguous (maybe just *contextually* ambiguous). For instance, if one claims that P(a) ∧ ¬P(a), parameterisation holds that one is in effect claiming that $P_1(a) \land \neg P_2(a)$ (e.g. elephants are big and not big, because they are big in the context of land animals on Earth, but not big in the context of stars and planets)." (Priest, Graham, Francesco Berto, and Zach Weber, "Dialetheism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/dialetheism/>.)

manner. They either conceded to the inconsistent conclusions or chose to suspend judgement and pass over in silence.

The way in which certain theological contradictions have been received and addressed has thus been a catalyst for the amounting diversity in Islamic theology. Amidst the differing methodological approaches, Islamic theologians and philosophers seemed to have, on the most part, remained within certain metaphysical and logical parameters. The metaphysical and logical parameters to which I am referring is the law of non-contradiction (abbreviated as LNC henceforth) and Aristotelian logic, respectively. Attempting to grapple with theological contradictions, while strictly remaining within, and conforming to, both or at least one of these parameters appears to have considerably shaped the methodology of Islamic theology.

In the course of this paper, I shall like to propose a resolve to a given Islamic theological contradiction. My resolve is based on shifting from two of the common methodological approaches to relatively unconventional ones. The first of which involves shifting the metaphysical parameters to a dialethic approach. The second of which involves shifting the logical parameters to a paraconsistent logic. I confine myself to the first in this paper. I concede that espousing each of these approaches, as they are commonly understood, may not prove to be an entirely novel move in resolving a given theological contradiction[222]. Though, what shall

---

222 See:

Göcke, B., 2016. The Paraconsistent God. In: H. Von, T. Marschler and T. Schärtl, ed., *Rethinking the Concept of a Personal God Classical Theism, Personal Theism, and Alternative Concepts of God*. Münster: Münster Aschendorff Verlag, pp.177-199.

Cotnoir, A., 2017. Theism and Dialetheism. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 96(3), pp.592-609.

Beall, J. and Cotnoir, A., 2017. God of the gaps: a neglected reply to God's stone problem. *Analysis*, 77(4), pp.681–689.

Beall, J., 2019. Christ – A Contradiction: A Defense of Contradictory Christology. *Journal of Analytic Theology*, 7, pp.400-433.

Beall, J., 2021. *The contradictory Christ*. 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

prove to be distinct is the way I hope to depart from the conventional understanding of these approaches in resolving the selected theological contradiction. The reasons for this will, I hope, become apparent during this paper.

The way I shall propose my resolve to a given Islamic theological contradiction is as follows: I shall initiate by highlighting the Islamic theological contradiction I anticipate resolving. This is the paradox of an unknowable and ineffable God. Prior to fleshing out this paradox, I shall briefly mention some contemporary resolves to the paradox of ineffability. Thereafter, I will begin laying the groundwork for my resolve. This will firstly include demonstrating that the paradox of an unknowable and ineffable God is a metaphysical paradox and not a logical one. I shall establish why it ought to be considered as a metaphysical paradox and exactly what it means to be one. This will involve obtaining a nuanced perspective on the metaphysical principle that is being violated by the paradox of an unknowable and ineffable God. This principle is the LNC. Secondly, if the paradox of an unknowable and ineffable God is considered as a metaphysical paradox, it would seem appropriate to resort to metaphysical dialetheism in resolving this metaphysical paradox. However, I demonstrate that metaphysical dialetheism is not an amenable option. This is due to the three underlying conditions upon which metaphysical dialetheism qualifies. Each of these conditions prove inimical to an unknowable and ineffable God. Once this groundwork has been laid, I introduce my resolve. This would be an alternative to metaphysical dialetheism, which I refer to as 'mystical dialetheism'. Mystical dialetheism shall be exclusive to resolving the paradox of an unknowable and ineffable God. It will comprise of an alternative set of conditions to what constitutes metaphysical dialetheism. These conditions will be specific to an unknowable and ineffable God. They will be grounded in a Wittgensteinian silence and ultimately a mystical approach. This mystical approach will accommodate the contradictory nature of an unknowable and ineffable God.

2. The Problem

There are instances within medieval Islamic theology which advocate an unknowable and ineffable God. Although instances of this peculiar view of God are not very prominent, they do exist. Proponents of this view range from the early Arab philosopher *Al-Kindī*[223] to the

---

223 Notice that phrase ''the One in truth.'' This reflects a terminological shift from the third to the fourth section of *On First Philosophy*. Whereas previously al-Kindī spoke only of things that were ''accidentally one'' as opposed to ''essentially one,'' now he contrasts things that are ''one metaphorically [*bi-'l-majāz*]'' to God, who is ''One in truth [*al-wāḥ id bi-'l-ḥ aqīqa*]'' or the ''true One [*al-wāḥ id al-ḥaqq*].'' The meaning, however, is the same: what is ''metaphorically'' one is what is both one and many. The ''true One'' is only one, not at all multiple. In the rest of *On First Philosophy*, al-Kindī will therefore try to specify the sense of ''oneness'' that applies to God. However, he does this largely by enumerating the senses of ''one'' that do not apply to God. For this reason, al-Kindī's treatment of how we speak of God—what one might call ''theological discourse''—is usually thought of as being thoroughly negative. If this is right then in the end all al-Kindī has to say about God is that we can say nothing: He is utterly ineffable, inaccessible to language or thought. I think it would be more accurate to say that al-Kindī, in these final passages, is surveying the senses in which ''one'' might be understood, and narrowing down to the correct sense by a process of elimination. (Adamson, 2007, p. 53-54)

Al-Kindī's one-page description of the "Eternal" [al-Azalī] contains around forty Arabic negative particles. Simply put, God's being the cause [*ʿilla*] of creation makes Her uncaused, ineffable, unknowable, and utterly transcendent. She is the source of all multiplicity; and She is beyond the multiplicity and unity that belongs to creation. As the true One, She cannot be spoken of in the way creation is spoken of. "God, 'the true One,' is completely transcendent, in the precise sense that nothing can be said of Him." (Kars, 2019, p. 78)

Al-Kindī not only negates discursive proofs of the divine essence, but he also closes the door of any non-discursive access to God, including mysticism. God becomes utterly apophatic, inaccessible, and the unknowable ultimate cause and agent. (Kars, 2019, p. 81)

infamous mystic *Ibn al-ʿArabī*[224] with the early *Ismāʿīlīs*[225] and *al-Ghazālī*[226] situated

somewhere in between. I am not suggesting that the intricate details which constitute the very

---

224 In this section devoted to "knowledge of the station of the transcendence of divine unity" [*maʿrifat manzil tanzīhiyya al-tawḥīd*], Ibn al-ʿArabī makes the philosophical argument that God's transcendence entails Her exemption from all possible human definitions, attributions, and traits, including Her very unity. Hence, "*We can say nothing about the word 'unity' when applied to God*." God is made free of any description through the word "unity"; in other words, "oneness" cannot qualify God if God is to be One. Divine unity is like a house that has no door, says Ibn al-ʿArabī; no one can enter this house, but some can merely peek inside via divine unveiling. (Kars, 2019, p. 101)

Ibn al-ʿArabī on Divine Majesty and Beauty:

His essence is exalted above all motions and stillnesses, all bewilderment and mindfulness. It is too high to be overtaken by any explanation, express or implied, just as it is too great to be limited and described. (Ibn al-ʿArabī Translated by Tosun Bayrak and Rabia T. Harris in Renard, 2014, p. 182)

225 For early Ismāʿīlīs, in line with Plotinus (d.270), God was the unknowable absolute One who can be neither comprehended by reason nor accurately described. Their doctrine removed all the attributes, including "being," from God, and unlike the majority of the Muʿtazilites, they kept Her essence utterly unknowable and ineffable. (Kars, 2019, p. 26)

Within this Ismāʿīlī cosmology, Ibn al-Wālid's God is utterly unknowable, far beyond comprehension, limitation, or definition. Discourse [*ʿibāra*] cannot reach anything about Her; anything that can be known or spoken of is created. The Originator is not a body, not a substance, not an accident, not a matter, not a form, not in space, not in time, not comparable to anything, not speakable, and so forth. (Kars, 2019, p. 55)

226 Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī most famously had a distinctly negative approach to language concerning God. In the *Highest Aim* [*al- Maqṣad al-Asnā*], al-Ghazālī adopts all the principles of a philosophical apophaticism. The unknowability of the divine essence is strongly emphasized, again and again underlining that the highest knowledge concerning God is one's own incapacity to know—docta ignorantia. Not only divine essence but even divine attributes cannot be known to us as much as they relate to the divine essence. We can only imagine divine attributes through comparison with their created counterparts, but their reality is beyond human conception, imagination, and intellection. Contrasting negative and positive language concerning the divine essence, al-Ghazālī finds the former superior. Accordingly, negations contain a latent praise of God more powerful and correct than positively describing Her with qualified attributes:

> Since there is no likeness of Him, none knows His essence other than He. So al-Junayd . . . was right when he remarked: "*none knows God except God*." For that reason, He gave even His noblest creature a name, with which He veiled Himself, as He said: "Praise the name of your Lord Most High" [Q.87:1]. *So, by God, none knows God except God, in this world, or the next.*

> On his deathbed, Dhū al-Nūn was asked, "What do you long for?" He replied: "That I knew Him before I die—be it for an instant." Now, this confuses the hearts of most of the weak, and leads them to the delusion of negation [*nafy*] and ineffectualism [*taʿṭīl*]. . . . I say: if someone were to say "I do not know God," that would be true. And if they were to say "I know God" that would also be true. . . .

> This would be the case were a person to ask another, "Do you know Abū Bakr, the faithful one?" . . . If one replied, "Who does not know Abū Bakr, or is ignorant about him? Given the visibility, fame, and renown of his name, is it conceivable that anyone in the world doesn't know him? . . ." This reply would be true. . . .

notion of God's unknowability and ineffability for each of the aforementioned theologians and philosophers is homogeneous in any way. It most certainly is not. Nevertheless, I do not anticipate fleshing out those subtle distinctions here. That is not the aim of this paper. Although it is worth mentioning two relevant points that are significant to the purpose of this paper. The first is to merely establish that there *exists* a notion of an unknowable and ineffable God within Islamic theology. Irrespective of how implausible it may seem. The second is to buttress my own view of an unknowable and ineffable God in virtue of offering an *approximate* representation of one of the views of the above-mentioned proponents. I do not anticipate dwelling on this matter beyond both points.

3. Contemporary Resolves to Ineffability

Prior to fleshing out my view of an unknowable and ineffable God, allow me to draw on some contemporary views on ineffability. This will help provide a brief synopsis of the various approaches that have been adopted by contemporary authors in attempting to resolve the ineffability paradox. Moreover, it shall reveal how we can consider these various approaches to be fundamentally similar – albeit from at least one perspective. My hope is that this will demonstrate what makes my approach distinct from theirs.

But if another were asked, "Do you know him [Abū Bakr, the faithful one]," and replied "Who am I to know the faithful one? Alas, far from it! None knows him except himself, or someone who is like him or above him. Who am I to claim to know him or even hope for that? People like me hear his name and attributes, but as for claiming to know him—that is impossible." *This is also true—indeed, this proposition has an aspect, which comes closer to the due glorification and homage*.

In the following discussion, al-Ghazālī gives other examples as well, in order to point out that the negative language is superior to positive language concerning the divine essence. His association of the negative language with praise, and the principle of unknowability, *none knows God except God*, clearly resonate with al- Baṭalyawsī, Maimonides, and the Arabic Aristotle among others. (Kars, 2019, p. 124-125)

William Alston (1956) in his analysis on ineffability attempts to settle the matter by levelling two arguments against the claim that 'God is ineffable'. In the first argument he suggests that the claim 'God is ineffable' is self-refuting in virtue of the definition of ineffability. In the second argument he turns his focus to the subject of the claim, namely, the proper name 'God'. Even if it were possible to say that 'X is ineffable'. The 'X' in question cannot be something entirely unknown. The proper name 'God' that is used to stand in for the object 'X' has a sense in which it is used. The sense must therefore determine a reference with which we are able to distinguish God from other objects. This, however, would not be possible if God is ineffable.

One may try to avoid this issue by shifting the predicate 'ineffable' from God *Himself* to our experiences of Him. However, as David E. Cooper (1985) has established this does not prove to be a successful move. Cooper mentions that conceding to make sense of our ineffable experiences of God would collapse the idea back into the very issue of being able to identify Him. He states, "The circle would be complete: we can allow an ineffable God of experience only if we can identify an effable God of reason, but we can do the latter only if we can first make sense of, and therefore communicate, the former" (Cooper (1985) quoted in Bennett-Hunter, 2016, p. 22).

John Hick (2000) proposes a somewhat similar resolve. For Hick, each of the great theistic traditions has an exclusively unique way of expressing God's ultimate nature (the Real) which, inherently, is inaccessible to human beings. Yet the possibility of speaking of God exists through balancing various 'humanly describable attributes'. Thus, for Hick, each religious tradition possesses a 'dual concept of God'. This involves 'both trans-categorial in the ultimate divine nature and yet religiously available in virtue of qualities analogous to but limitlessly greater than our own'. Hick's view seems to make a distinction between inaccessible and accessible modes of ineffability. If the accessible modes of ineffability are to represent or bear

any resemblance to the inaccessible modes, then it appears were back to the same issue Cooper had highlighted.

Further still, Jonathan D. Jacobs (2015) has proposed an interesting take on the matter of ineffability. Nevertheless, I think his proposal also collapses back into the issue brought up by Cooper. Jacobs sets out to defend the following 'Ineffability Thesis: For any proposition P in *P*, not(*F*(P)) and not(*F*(not-P))'. He does so while conforming to two constraints. The first is a substantive conception of ineffability as opposed to a deflationary one. The second is consistency with the truth of orthodox Christian doctrines. Jacobs acknowledges that enacting both constraints on his defence of the ineffability thesis would produce an inconsistency. The former constraint demands that the three divine hypostases be a substantive fact. This hardly seems tenable. For if God were substantially ineffable then the possibility of the hypostases as three, or even hypostases itself for that matter, would not exist. The latter constraint demands the consistency (and truth) of the three divine hypostases since it is a central doctrine of orthodox Christianity. This is also untenable. The way Jacobs deals with this inconsistency is by resorting to what is called '*parameterisation*'[227] – that is avoiding the contradiction at face-value. He considers the claim 'God is ineffable, incomprehensible, and inconceivable' as exclusively referring to '*as He is in Himself*, as He is intrinsically'. He distinguishes these sorts of claims from those that are effable truths about how God is related to his creation. He too appears to draw a distinction between inaccessible and accessible modes of ineffability. Therefore, it is apparent that Jacobs' resolve is not very different from that of Hick's.

The same goes for Sebastian Gäb (2017). Having analysed both Alston's and Hick's view on ineffability, Gäb attempts to provide what he calls 'a better solution' to the paradox of

---

227 See footnote 2.

ineffability. In order to avoid the 'ineffability thesis[228]' Gäb proposes that the phrase 'God is ineffable' needs to be dropped altogether. Primarily because it is prone to both of Alston's arguments against ineffability. His alternative to this is that "*ineffability is not predicated of God, but rather of propositions about God*. God is not ineffable, propositions about God are. That is, the term 'ineffable' can only be meaningfully applied to things which could in principle be expressible – namely, propositions" (Gäb, 2017, p. 6). Again, we witness the distinction between inaccessible and accessible modes of ineffability. Perhaps in Gäb's case it might be better phrased as a distinction between expressible and inexpressible modes of ineffability. In fact, Gäb acknowledges that his solution is not compatible with a radical form of ineffability. The interpretation of which is perhaps faithful to a mystic's intention. Most notably, where there is an unwillingness to compromise on saying anything about God, even if that is what He is not.

It appears that if we want to grant 'philosophical success' (whatever that might be) to these proposed solutions, we would do so at the expense of the ineffability claim. In such a case, we avoid the contradiction by compromising the ineffability claim for a less radical view perhaps. Much like the authors noted above. Otherwise, we bite the bullet and concede to the contradiction. Although, for most theologians and philosophers that is an inadmissible option. Since for them the ineffability claim would either be literally false or meaningless.

4. The Paradox of an Unknowable and Ineffable God

---

228 how can I meaningfully say about something that it is ineffable? For if it were ineffable, I could not say anything about it, not even that it is ineffable. And *vice versa*, if I can say about it that it is ineffable, there is at least one thing I can say about it – namely, that it is ineffable – and then it cannot be ineffable. It seems as if any proposition of the form 'X is ineffable' (I shall call this the *ineffability thesis*) is paradoxical or self-defeating. (Gäb, 2017, p. 1)

The unknowable and ineffable God which I shall be referring to during this paper is an *approximate* representation of *al-Ghazālī's* view[229]. For *al-Ghazālī*, as Kars (2019) suggests, the unknowability of God's essence is indicative of our expressive inability. That means the very fact that God's essence is beyond all human categories[230], any articulation of God, whether it be positive or negative, would be contradictory. *Al-Ghazālī* seems to express this contradiction in the following manner:

> If someone were to say "I do not know God," that would be true. And if they were to say "I know God," that would also be true. *Now it is known that negation and affirmation (of the same proposition) cannot both be true*, but rather split truth and falsity. If the negation is true then the affirmation is false, and vice versa. (*al-Ghazālī* in Kars, 2019, p. 162)[231]

Al-Ghazālī appears to focus on two contradictory statements *about* God. However, there is a more fundamental issue at stake here. That is the paradox of unknowability and ineffability of

---

229 It is worth noting that the sort of unknowability that I am ascribing to the Islamic God is not the kind that is manifested in *Ismāʿīlī* theology. The feature which distinguishes my idea of unknowability from *Ismāʿīlī* theology is that I don't think anything is impossible for an absolute transcendent God while they assume it is. The distinction that I am drawing on can be better appreciated in the extract below:

> From the beginning of their movement in the mid- third/ ninth century, Ismāʿīlī Shīʿites had developed a cosmology that was heavily influenced by a set of Neoplatonic ideas and that interpreted God's divine unity (*tawḥīd*) in a radical way. For Ismāʿīlī philosophers and theologians, *tawḥīd* meant that God is absolutely transcendent and cannot in any way be part of this world. He is beyond being and beyond knowability. God's absolute transcendence makes it impossible that He causes anything in His creation, since that would require some immanence on His part. (Griffel, 2017, p. 219)

230 God does not inhere in anything, and nothing inheres in Him. He is exalted above being contained by space, and too holy to be bounded by time; on the contrary, He existed before He created time and space. He now has [the attributes] by which He was [previously characterized], and is distinguished from His creatures by His attributes. There is not in His essence what is other than He, nor in what is other than He is there [anything of] His essence. He is exalted above change [of state] and movement. Originated things do not inhere [or subsist] in Him, and accidental [events] do not befall Him. Rather, He does not cease; through the qualities of His majesty He is beyond cessation, and through the attributes of His perfection He is independent of [or does not require] any further increase of perfection. (*al-Ghazālī* translated by Watt in Renard, 2014, p. 110)

231 Also see Heck, P., 2014. *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion*. Oxon: Routledge, pp.119.

God. Although both the paradox of unknowability and ineffability are intimately tied together[232], they can be presented independently. The paradox of unknowability stems from our ability to know an unknowable God. If every truth, including the truth about God's unknowability, is possibly knowable in principle, then it logically follows that every truth is known at some time. This can be formally expressed as: $\forall p \ (p \to \Diamond Kp) \vdash \forall p \ (p \to Kp)$. The issue emerges in transitioning from the *possibility* to know every truth $\forall p \ (p \to \Diamond Kp)$ via logical entailment to *knowing* every truth at some time $\forall p \ (p \to Kp)$. This includes knowing the truth of an unknowable God. The paradox of ineffability can be presented using the same framework. For the sake of relevance, let us switch the K (epistemic operator) with E to represent an ability to express. In such a case if every truth, including the truth about God's inexpressibility (ineffability), is possibly expressible in principle, then it logically follows that every truth is expressible at some time. This can be formally expressed as: $\forall p \ (p \to \Diamond Ep) \vdash \forall p \ (p \to Ep)$. The issue emerges in transitioning from the *possibility* to express every truth $\forall p \ (p \to \Diamond Ep)$ via logical entailment to expressing every truth at some time $\forall p \ (p \to Ep)$. This includes expressing the truth about an inexpressible (ineffable) God.

The way both these paradoxes are tied together is something which *al-Ghazālī* seemed aware of. If, as *al-Ghazālī* holds, we are unable to know God's essence, then we are incapable to express anything about Him[233]. Yet, the very view that God is unknowable and ineffable does

---

232 Aside from the paradoxical representation of both unknowability and ineffability, there is a distinction to be made between them. Thomas Hofweber (2016) refers to this distinction in the following manner: "Ineffable facts, if there are any, are completely beyond us, unknowable and beyond what we can consider or entertain. Ineffable facts thus can be more hidden from us than merely unknowable ones or merely incomprehensible ones. All ineffable facts are unknowable and incomprehensible, but not the other way round. We will never know whether the number of grains of sand on earth exactly 500 million years ago was odd or even, but we can represent both options. And we might never comprehend or understand why anything exists at all, even though we can easily represent this fact." (Hofweber, 2016, p. 251)

233 Given the fact that — "God is a being necessarily existing of Himself (*al-mawjud al-wajib al-wujud bi-dhatihi*)" (*Maqsad* 47, M 342–43), it should be clear that this — "peculiar divine property belongs only to God and only God knows it." Moreover — "it is inconceivable that anyone know it save Him or one who is His like,

just that. Although, *al-Ghazālī* may not have articulated the paradox in this particular manner he concedes that such issues are direct violations of the LNC. "These paradoxes are *real* rather than mere rhetorical tools or "seeming contradictions"; they do violate the LNC, yet only at the propositional level" (Kars, 2019, p. 163). We thus gain a sense of the radical idea of unknowability and ineffability that I am referring to here. To streamline my view further, I refer to and adopt Guy Bennett-Hunter's (2015) characterisation of 'ineffable'.

> As a result, the relevant meaning of 'ineffable', and the sense in which I shall be using it in this paper, is a reference not just to the idea of that which is inexpressible or in practice unknown but to the concept of what is in principle resistant to conceptual formulation and (therefore) literal linguistic articulation. 'Ineffability', in this sense, includes a non-disparaging sense of 'mystery'. (Bennett-Hunter, 2015, p. 489-490)

5. Preliminaries

Before fleshing out my proposed resolve to the paradox of unknowability and ineffability, I would need to draw on two preliminary matters in the proceeding sections. It is important that both matters are diligently clarified as they shall serve to lay the groundwork for my resolve. The first matter involves why the paradox of an unknowable and ineffable God should be considered as a metaphysical paradox and not a logical one. Furthermore, I shall clarify what it exactly means for a paradox to be a metaphysical paradox in virtue of both a mind-independent and mind-dependent reality. The second matter involves introducing metaphysical dialetheism as a resolve to this paradox and demonstrating the need to propose an alternative.

---

since He has no like, no other knows it." On such an account, — "only God knows God" (*ibid.*). So the resources of philosophy confirm God's uniqueness or *tawhid*: the utter distinction of the One from all else: — "everything the exercise of which is possible," which does in fact exist from that One — "according to the best ways of order and perfection" (*Maqsad* 47, M 342). (Burrell, 1987, p. 181)

Both preliminaries shall contribute towards motivating what I call a 'mystical dialetheism' in resolving the paradox of unknowability and ineffability.

5.1 Metaphysical and Logical Paradoxes

The paradox of an unknowable and ineffable God should be considered as a metaphysical paradox. The metaphysical perspective in this regard would infer that it is a *real* paradox. This means, it has an ontological status of some kind or that it bears a relation to reality in some way. As opposed to merely being logical, mathematical, or semantical. Considering this, the paradox, initially, ought to be grounded in a metaphysics before transitioning beyond it and being logically expressed. To achieve this, I take metaphysics to be more fundamental than logic[234].

Prior to demarcating between the two metaphysical and logical paradoxes I should emphasise that the distinction I have in mind is not the kind made by Ramsey (1925) (quoted in Priest (1994)). Ramsey (1925) makes a distinction between two types of self-reference paradoxes. It is a distinction that he thinks had been entirely neglected in *Principia Mathematica*. He brands the two types as Groups A and B. Group A includes contradictions that occur within a logical or mathematical system. Examples of these are as follows:

(1) The class of all classes which are not members of themselves.

(2) The relation between two relations when one does not have it-self to the other.

---

234 This is not to deny or overlook the fact that both domains bear an intimate connection, which, for the most part, is difficult to entangle. See Priest, G., 2019. Metaphysics and Logic: an Observation in Metametaphysics. *Giornale di Metaphysica*, 41(1), pp.68-77.

(3) Burali Forti's contradiction of the greatest ordinal. (Ramsey (1925) quoted in Priest, 1994, p. 25-26)

Group B includes contradictions that do not fall squarely into logical and mathematical systems. Instead, they include 'faulty ideas concerning thought and language'. Examples of these are as follows:

(4) "I am lying."

(5) The least integer not nameable in fewer than nineteen syllables.

(6) The least indefinable ordinal.

(7) Richards's contradiction.

(8) Weyl's contradiction about "heterologische". (Ramsey (1925) quoted in Priest, 1994, p. 26)

The distinction that I have in mind is not as specific as Ramsey's. It is not a distinction between types of self-reference paradoxes. Rather, it is a more generic distinction which draws on what it means for a thing to be 'metaphysical' as opposed to 'logical'. If one agrees with Ramsey's distinction, then both Groups A and B may fall within what I call 'logical paradoxes' as opposed to 'metaphysical' ones. The underlying factor which demarcates between what is 'metaphysical' and what is 'logical', I think, is distinguishing between the ontological status (or more simply the existence) of something and its formal expression. Metaphysics, in the most generic sense of the term, examines the fundamental structure of reality[235]. It does so by primarily determining which types of objects/entities can and cannot be ontologically established. Subsequently, it engages with such objects/entities accordingly. The criteria and

---

235 See Sider, T., 2011. *Writing the book of the world*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp.1-6, 197-255.

method employed in ontologically establishing and engaging with objects/entities is hardly agreeable. Nonetheless, the ontological status of objects/entities are, on the most part, determined by seeking to instantiate them within what we might call 'logical space'[236]. Logical space is a hypothetical space which encapsulates all *metaphysically* possible worlds. Although logic (modal logic in particular) often refers to 'possible worlds', it seemingly does so, with metaphysical presuppositions[237].

The nature of logic is very much different. The central concern of logic, as noted in most contemporary textbooks, is logical consequence[238] or consequence relation. For logic to make advancements in being able to determine valid consequence relations it proposes certain structures. These structures serve as *models*[239] which seek to map-out given instances of consequence relations that are situated in natural language (i.e. the *target system* of our

---

236 Wittgenstein, who introduced the phrase to philosophy in the *Tractatus*, never defines logical space, yet we get a clear and intuitive idea of what it is supposed to be, namely, the space of all possibilities. If that is true, then we are immediately pushed to explain what possibilities are and what it means to say that logical space is the space of *all* possibilities. Traditionally, it is propositions that are taken as bearers of the modal properties of possibility, necessity, impossibility and contingency, and these modal notions are in turn explained by appeal to truth at a possible world. Logical space, then, is, according to current orthodoxy, a space of possible worlds, and possibilities are propositions true at some possible world, hence, belonging to logical space. Impossibilities will be propositions that are not true at any possible world; hence, they are not in logical space. Contingencies will be propositions that are possible but false at some worlds. Necessities will be propositions that are true at all possible worlds. (Aranyosi, 2013, p. 9)

237 What I mean is that if principles that are usually considered as 'logical', such as LNC, are grounded in metaphysics, then we have good reasons to think that logic in general is grounded in metaphysics. Perhaps there are no such things as 'logical principles', as we might be able to ground them all in metaphysics. I wish to suggest that what we usually call 'logical principles', such as LNC, are perhaps a sub-category of metaphysical principles. (Tahko, 2009, p. 44)

238 Definition 1 (Logical Consequence) *B is a logical consequence of $A_1, \ldots, A_n$ if and only if there is no case in which $A_1, \ldots, A_n$ are all true but B is not true.* (Beall and Logan, 2017, p. 5)

239 There are a range of details that need to be specified when proposing a model. First, we need to carefully specify both what object *x* is being proposed *as a model* and what object *y* we will be using *x* as a *model of*. We call the thing being modeled the *target system* of the model, and we call the object *x* a *model of* the target system. After specifying these, we still need to specify the exact way in which *x* is being seen as similar to *y*. These assumptions – the assumptions that *x* is similar to *y* in *these particular ways* – are called *modeling hypotheses.* (Beall and Logan, 2017, p. 14)

models). The method by which this is achieved involves specifying a *modelling hypothesis*[240].

The modelling hypothesis proposes[241] an isomorphism[242] between the *target system* and the *model*. To illustrate this, take Beall's and Logan's (2017) example of Watson and Crick's model of the DNA molecule[243]. Watson and Crick's modelling hypothesis offered an isomorphism between the *target system* of their model (which was a 'tin-and-cardboard double-helical structure') and the *model of* the DNA molecule. This isomorphism was in virtue of the *shape* of both structures, namely, the target system and the model. The similarity between the two structures offered by the isomorphism is so both structures maintain precisely the same formal features (a homomorphism[244]). In this sense it is not offering an actual replica of the DNA molecule in any ontological sense. At most, it is an *approximate* representation of how we can maintain and express a formal function *f* between the two given structures.

---

240 To do this, of course, we must specify the *target system* of our models – the parts of natural language whose logical consequence relation we are attempting to model, as well as the *modeling hypotheses* – the particular aspects of the natural language relation of logical consequence that we are supposing are similar to the relations we highlight in our models. (Beall and Logan, 2017, p. 15)

241 The modelling hypothesis has limitations as A.J. Cotnoir (2019) has highlighted.

242 An isomorphism is a homomorphism between two structures that is also bijective. In other words, if there is an isomorphism between two structures, then they have exactly the same formal features. (Cook, 2009, p. 161)

243 Beall and Logan (2017) provide the following example:

let's look at a well-known example of modeling from the sciences: Watson and Crick's production of an actual tin-and-cardboard double-helical structure as a model of the DNA molecule. The *target system* of their model was the DNA molecule. The tin-and-cardboard structure they build was their *model of* the DNA molecule. And, finally, their modelling hypothesis was that the *shape* of the two structures were generally similar. Importantly, the tin-and-cardboard structure was different in many ways from an actual DNA molecule. In particular, as Ronald Giere has amusingly observed, Watson and Crick were *not* proposing that their model was similar to an actual DNA molecule in the sense that both were composed of tin and cardboard. (Beall and Logan, 2017, p. 14-15)

244 A homomorphism between two structures is a function f from one structure to the other (plus a correlation between functions or relations on the first structure and functions and relations on the second structure) such that the function f is structure-preserving. In other words, if f is a homomorphism between two structures, then, for any relation R on the first structure, and the corresponding relation S on the second structure, we have: $R(x, y)$ if and only if $S(f(x), f(y))$ and, for any binary function g on the first structure and corresponding function h on the second structure, we have: $f(g(x, y)) = h(f(x), f(y))$. (Cook, 2009, p. 139)

With this distinction in mind, a metaphysical paradox bears a relation to reality in some way while a logical paradox does not. The paradox of unknowability and ineffability pertains to an Islamic God who possesses an ontological status (or existence) – albeit one which we cannot comprehend in its true sense[245] (more on this shortly). It seems for *al-Ghazālī* too, this paradox, as noted above, is *real* in the sense that it is not confined to a formal language of logic or its semantics. It is not a logical, mathematical, or semantic paradox which falls into either of Ramsey's two Groups (A or B).

Nonetheless, it would only make sense for this to be a metaphysical paradox, which results in a contradiction, if it had violated a *metaphysical* principle. That principle is the LNC. If the LNC is considered a logical, mathematical, or semantic principle, then the contradiction it gives rise to cannot be metaphysical in nature. It only seems appropriate for the LNC to impose relevant constraints on elements that are members of its own domain[246]. A logical, mathematical, and semantic interpretation of the LNC would thus govern a logical theory, arithmetic, and language, respectively. The constraints which the LNC imposes within these domains would not have any bearing on reality. Otherwise, it would mean applying the LNC to members across domains that are not relevant to it. This would disregard the constraints that ultimately distinguish one domain from another. Consequently, I shall consider the LNC as a metaphysical principle which can be formally represented as: $\forall x\ \forall P\ \neg\ (P(\mathrm{x}) \wedge \neg P(x))$. This metaphysical reading of the LNC can be traced back to at least one of the variations of

---

245 See *The Qur'an* 42: 12 in Abdel Haleem, M., 2005. *The Qur'an*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.312.

246 A similar point is made by Berto (2007). He acknowledges that if there are different forms of contradictions and the LNC is in essence a principle that bars contradictions, then they would need to be different forms of barring.

Aristotle's definition of the LNC[247]. The very essence of this reading as opposed to the others[248] is that it focuses on barring a contradictory state of affairs. It is the defiance of this metaphysical principle which makes the paradox of unknowability and ineffability a metaphysical paradox.

5.2 The LNC and Two Views of Reality

To suppose that the LNC is a metaphysical principle that is being violated by God's unknowability and ineffability paradox would require further clarification. Firstly, this would involve determining whether the LNC is a metaphysical principle which considers reality as mind-independent *or* mind-dependent[249]. Secondly, it would involve determining the level of epistemic access we possess in being able to know how the LNC conforms to (or is an intrinsic feature of) either view of reality. Let us take each of these in turn. If reality is mind-independent, then (in principle) it would make sense to think of the LNC as an intrinsic feature of that reality. This is in opposition to thinking of a mind-independent reality *conforming* to

---

247 Berto (2007 has remarked under this reading of the LNC: "The same object cannot both have and not have the same property" – which is quite close to the first Aristotelian formulation of the *Metaphysics*: The same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject in the same respect; we must presuppose, in the face of dialectical objections, any further qualifications which might be added. (1005b 19-22) (Berto, 2007, p. 13). Of course, there are other variations of Aristotle's characterisation of the LNC. See Vasilis Politis (2004) Ch. 5.

248

     (LNC1) $\neg\,(\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha)$ [Syntactic version]
     (LNC2a) $\neg\,(T\,(\ulcorner\alpha\urcorner) \wedge F\,(\ulcorner\alpha\urcorner))$ [Semantic version*]
     (LNC2b) $\neg\,(T\,(\ulcorner\alpha\urcorner) \wedge T\,(\ulcorner\neg\alpha\urcorner))$ [Semantic version**]
     (LNC2c) $\neg\,(T\,(\ulcorner\alpha\urcorner) \wedge \neg T\,(\ulcorner\alpha\urcorner))$ [Semantic version***]
     (LNC4a) $\neg\,(\vdash_x\alpha \wedge \vdash_x \neg\alpha)$ [Pragmatic version*]
     (LNC4b) $\neg\,(\vdash_x\alpha \wedge \dashv_x \alpha)$ [Pragmatic version**]
     (Berto, 2007, p. 11-15)

249 These positions are not to be confused with types of logical realism and logical anti-realism. Logical realism being "the belief that logical facts are independent of anything human: that the facts would have been as they are regardless of whether or not humans comprehended them, or even had existed at all" (Rush, 2014, p. 13-14). While logical anti-realism is the negation of logical realism.

the LNC. The act of conforming seems to imply a relational property[250] between a mind-independent reality and the LNC. This would result in two possibilities. Both of which are metaphysically untenable. First, there is a relational property in virtue of which a mind-independent reality conforms to a mind-dependent view of the LNC. The issue with this possibility is that the mind-independence of that reality would be compromised by its very conformity to a mind-dependent (metaphysical) principal. Second, there is a relational property in virtue of which a mind-independent reality conforms to a mind-independent view of the LNC. The issue with this possibility is that a mind-independent view of the LNC would imply that it is an independent entity which possesses its own existence (much like the reality in question). Moreover, given that both possibilities would be subscribing to a relational property, in either case they would infer an external relation. An external relation would thus be susceptible to a *possible* discontinuity[251]. This would allow for possible instances in which the relational property breaks down. Resultantly, this would make possible for instances of reality to be inconsistent. However, the LNC bars inconsistent possibilities. Therefore, the metaphysically tenable position seems to be that a mind-independent view of reality implies that the LNC is an intrinsic feature of that reality.

Alternatively, if reality is mind-dependent, then (in principle) it would make sense to think of the LNC as an intrinsic feature of that reality. This is in opposition to thinking of a mind-dependent reality *conforming* to the LNC. The reason for this is structurally the same as noted in the two possibilities above. Both of which are metaphysically untenable. Although in this case the previously considered mind-independent would be substituted with a mind-dependent

---

250 I take the term 'relational property' in its most generic sense and not specifically from a set theory perspective. In this case we can say that a given view of reality *a* bears an internal relation, R, to the LNC *b* on the condition that *a*'s standing in R to *b* is an intrinsic property of a. If this condition fails to be met then *a* shall bear an external relation to *b*.

251 That is if the condition is not met. As a result of which *a* shall bear an external relation to *b*.

one. First, there is a relational property in virtue of which a mind-dependent reality conforms to a mind-independent view of the LNC. The issue with this possibility is that the mind-dependence of that reality would be compromised by its very conformity to a mind-independent (metaphysical) principle. Second, there is a relational property in virtue of which a mind-dependent reality conforms to a mind-dependent view of the LNC. The issue with this possibility is that a mind-dependent view of the LNC would make explicit an external relation between a mind-dependent reality and the LNC. As previously noted, this would allow for *possible* instances of reality to be inconsistent. However, the LNC bars inconsistent possibilities. Therefore, the metaphysically tenable position seems to be that a mind-dependent view of reality implies that the LNC is an intrinsic feature of that reality.

There are two underlying distinctions between the LNC being an intrinsic feature of both a mind-independent and a mind-dependent reality. Firstly, a mind-independent reality is the way the world is *independent* of minds. While a mind-dependent reality is the way the world is *dependent* of minds. If the LNC is an intrinsic feature of a mind-independent reality, then the reality in question would have to be consistent independent of our minds. A counterexample of the LNC in this case would, in essence, be a counterexample of a consistent reality. This would, as Tahko (2009) mentions, be a true contradiction in the world. However, observable reality appears to be consistent (more on this shortly)[252]. For Tahko, this is because 'the LNC is a true metaphysical principle of the world' to which our observations conform. This means we can observe reality in virtue of its intrinsic feature, namely, the LNC[253]. Observing true contradictions in the world would defy the very intrinsic feature of reality in virtue of which it

---

[252] See Priest (1999) and Beall (2000).

[253] I should clarify that although Tuomas E. Tahko (2009) has argued that the LNC is a metaphysical principle which concerns a mind-independent reality, he does not make the subtle distinction I have between the LNC being an intrinsic feature of both a mind-independent and mind-dependent reality.

is consistent[254]. Alternatively, if the LNC is an intrinsic feature of a mind-dependent reality, then the reality in question would have to be consistent dependent of our minds. A counterexample of the LNC in this case would, in essence, be a counterexample of consistent thought itself and not how the world is. The way instances of inconsistent thought constitute reality would thus allow for true contradictions in a (mind-dependent) world. Unlike the former position we need not locate observable instances of true contradictions in the world as a counterexample. Instances of inconsistent thoughts, which are composites of a mind-dependent reality, would suffice as a counterexample.

5.3 The LNC and Epistemic Access

Secondly, and this neatly brings us to determining the level of epistemic access we possess in being able to know how the LNC is an intrinsic feature of either view of reality. If the LNC is a metaphysical principle in virtue of a mind-independent reality, then the facts of that reality would also be mind-independent. This would be indicative of a type of epistemic realism[255].

> In any case, epistemic realism typically considers mind-independent epistemic facts as *categorically* reason-giving to rational agents. That is, as facts that exert authority over us and constrain what we ought to believe if we are rational, independently of our

---

254 Proponents of this view, such as Priest (1999) and Beall (2000), have discounted optical illusions in thinking that they are representations of true contradictions in the world. According to them the observable world is consistent. Though later Beall and Colyvan (2001) make the case for possible observable contradictions by referring to paraconsistent accounts of vagueness.

255 According to the standard reading of the distinction, epistemic realism is the position that asserts the existence of *mind-independent* epistemic facts and reasons for belief. The nature of mind-independent epistemic facts and reasons for belief may be understood either in broadly naturalist (e.g. consequentialist) or non-naturalist ways, depending on the type of epistemic realism one adopts. (Kyriacou and McKenna, 2018, p. 1-2)

desires, goals, wishes, intentions, whims, et cetera. (Kyriacou and McKenna, 2018, p. 1-2)

This means that reality is external to our minds. Our access to the knowledge of this reality lies in our *perception*[256] of the facts that constitute it. One of these facts is reality's intrinsic feature, namely, the LNC. The LNC imposes a *consistency* constraint, which is mind-independent, on reality itself. We can think of this consistency constraint acting much like a mind-independent filter. All (instances) of a mind-independent reality are sifted through this filter; only allowing for consistent state of affairs to pass through. The concurrence of our perception of reality and the LNC would thus only allow for a consistent mind-independent reality. It is due to this consistency constraint that our perceptions of reality cannot be inconsistent. Thus, the epistemic evidence for a consistent reality lies in our very perception of that reality's intrinsic feature, the LNC. I am using the term 'perception' from an *empiricists/nonconceptualists* perspective for whom perception is more basic in obtaining facts about the world than conception.

If the LNC is a metaphysical principle in virtue of a mind-dependent reality, then the facts of that reality would also be mind-dependent. This would be indicative of a type of anti-realism[257].

> In any case, epistemic anti-realism considers mind-dependent epistemic facts as *non-categorically* (or instrumentally) reason-giving to rational agents. That is, as facts that exert some authority over us and constrain what we ought to believe, depending on our particular desires, goals, intentions, plans, et cetera. For epistemic anti-realism, there is

---

256 For empiricists/nonconceptualists, as noted, perception is more basic than conception, given that perceptual states are a significant source of information about the world . . . (Bueno, 2013, p. 329)

257 Epistemic anti-realism is the denial of epistemic realism. It is the position that denies the existence of mind-independent epistemic facts and reasons for belief and proposes instead that epistemic facts and reasons for belief are *mind-dependent*, that is, they are up to us in some sense (e.g. relativism, expressivism). (Kyriacou and McKenna, 2018, p. 2)

no absolute fact of the matter about what one ought to believe if epistemically rational.

(Kyriacou and McKenna, 2018, p. 2)

This means that reality is internal to our minds. Our access to the knowledge of this reality lies in our *conception*[258] of the facts that constitute it. One of these facts is reality's intrinsic feature, namely the LNC. The LNC imposes a *consistency* constraint, which is mind-dependent, on how we conceive of reality. Once more we can think of this consistency constraint acting much like a filter. Although in this case it would be a mind-dependent filter. All (instances) of a mind-dependent reality are sifted through this filter; only allowing for consistent state of affairs to pass through. The concurrence of our conception of reality and the LNC would thus only allow for a consistent mind-dependent reality. It is due to this consistency constraint that our conceptions of reality cannot be inconsistent. Thus, the epistemic evidence for a consistent reality lies in our very conception of that reality's intrinsic feature, the LNC. I am using the term 'conception' from a *rationalists/conceptualists* perspective for whom conception is more basic in shaping our experiences about the world than perception.

5.4 Consistency Constraint

A consistency constraint, from both a mind-independent and a mind-dependent perspective, acts as a barring mechanism for the LNC. This means whether the consistency constraint functions on reality itself as in the case of a mind-independent reality or on our conception of reality as in the case of a mind-dependent reality, it seeks to proscribe contradictions.

---

258 rationalists/conceptualists tend to assign a more prominent role to the conceptual components that shape experience. The mind becomes, on these views, a particular group of dispositions that shape experience rather than the other way around. Mental content and mental states emerge from the dispositions the mind has to respond to whatever it is exposed to. (Bueno, 2013, p. 330)

Consequently, in either case reality is consistent in virtue of its intrinsic feature, namely, the LNC which imposes a consistency constraint. However, Graham Priest (1999) and JC Beall (2000) seem to agree that there is no empirical evidence to suppose that there are any (what they term) 'consistency filters'. It appears that both Priest and Beall are referring to the sort of consistency filter that is mind-dependent. It is the kind which seems to be a construction of the mind and one which influences our perceptual ability in proscribing us from *observing* contradictions in the world. Their rejection of such a consistency filter is predicated on the view that the observable world is consistent. On such a view, the existence of consistency filters would be redundant since no contradictory instances exist in the world that require to be filtered.

Prior to responding to the objection related to consistency filters, I shall outline the different reasons as to why Priest and Beall subscribe to the same view. That is the view 'that the observable world is consistent'. For Priest (1999, 2006), the observable world is consistent despite encountering certain visual illusions. We may experience certain visual illusions that *ostensibly* allow us to perceive contradictory situations. However, these visual illusions are not veridical. They are not genuine representations that coincide with reality. Thus, they are not indicative of an inconsistent world. To demonstrate this, Priest seems to rely heavily on our posterior considerations. Most notably our observation. Evidently, he acknowledges that posteriori considerations are defeasible. As a result of which our observation is not infallible. Many things appear to us in ways in which they are not. Yet he seems to rest this matter on the view that there is no cogent evidence to suggest that our perception deceives us in ways that present an inconsistent situation as consistent.

Beall takes particular issue with Priest's claim "that if $\alpha \wedge \sim\alpha$ were in the observable world, it *would be* seen. This, however, doesn't follow; 'can' simply does not imply 'would'." (Beall,

2000, p. 114). This is an issue to do with possessing an ability to observe contradictions. It would involve knowing what contradictions look like if we saw them. It is this ability to know what contradictions would look like which Priest appears to be relying on when making the claim that 'we have not seen any contradictions except for visual illusions'[259]. Although Beall accepts that we have not seen any contradictions, he rejects the reason which Priest is relying on, namely, our ability to observe contradictions.

The grounds upon which Beall accepts that we have not seen any contradictions, and consequently, that the observable world is consistent, rests on what he terms 'simplicity'. He argues that it is simplicity that prompts us to reject an inconsistent theory of the observable world and not observation. This means our observations are explained without postulating contradictions. If there is observable phenomenon α for which we need not refer to $\sim\alpha$ as a better explanation, then this simplicity approach prompts us to reject an inconsistent theory of the observable world. Thus, the observable world is consistent in virtue of simplicity and not in virtue of our ability to observe contradictions.

Considering what I have drawn on, I too am postulating that reality and the observable world is consistent. Whether this reality is mind-dependent or mind-independent, I take it to be consistent. It is consistent in virtue of its intrinsic feature, namely, the LNC which imposes a consistency constraint. More importantly, irrespective of whichever view of reality is adopted, I claim that the LNC and thus the consistency constraint is violated by God's unknowability and ineffability paradox. Therefore, it should be considered as a metaphysical paradox. There are however some notable differences between my view and that of Priest's and Beall's view.

---

259 The strategy pursued so far was: find a true contradictory state of affairs and look at it. If we were to succeed in this enterprise, the content of our visual experience would, by definition, be veridical. But the contents of our visual experiences are not always so: we experience many kinds of visual illusions. These are not necessarily of contradictory situations. (Priest, 1999, p. 439-440)

Firstly, Priest and Beall do not appear to hold the view that the world is consistent based on the LNC being an intrinsic feature of reality; the kind which imposes a consistency constraint. For Priest, the observable world is consistent in virtue of the fact that we have not observed contradictions despite possessing the perceptual ability to do so. For Beall, the observable world is consistent in virtue of simplicity. I have already articulated why I think the LNC is an intrinsic feature of reality upon which it imposes a consistency constraint. Appreciating the distinctions in each of the noted views reveals why the consistency constraint ('consistency filter') would prove to be redundant for Priest and Beall and necessary for me.

Secondly, although I find Beall's criticism of Priest's argument plausible, it is not something I endorse in resolving God's unknowability and ineffability paradox. This is bearing in mind that Beall (2000) had subsequently altered his view in Beall and Colyvan (2001) claiming that we do in fact see contradictions and thus the observable world is inconsistent. I shall touch on Beall's (and Mark Colyvan's) revised view shortly. To establish my position at this point, it will suffice in responding to Beall's (2000) take on why the observable world is consistent, namely his view on simplicity. For Beall, simplicity is ensued when it (successfully) prompts us towards rejecting an inconsistent theory of the observable world. Postulating an inconsistent theory to explain a given observable phenomenon would prove to be superfluous against what a consistent theory is already offering. An intuitive and natural explanation for say 'there are shoes sticking out from under the curtain' should serve to be just that. As opposed to 'there are shoes sticking out from under the curtain *and* there are not shoes sticking out from under the curtain'. The reason for this is straightforward. The latter explanation of the given observable phenomenon does not offer any additional explanatory power than what is already stated by the former explanation. Thus, our observations are explainable in virtue of a consistent theory of the observable world. There is no reason to postulate contradictions in doing so. It is for this reason that we have not observed any contradictions.

The problem that I have with Beall's simplicity view is not with the view itself but its confinement to the observable world. I accept that resorting to anything other than the simplicity view within the observable domains as an initial and natural explanation of a given phenomenon would seem counterintuitive. However, its extension to the non-observable domains may not seem as counterintuitive. Beall refers to Priest (1987, 1989) in this regard. Beall suggests that for Priest (1998) simplicity motivates dialetheism in various non-observable domains. He says: "For example, dialetheism, as Priest has argued, seems to afford a beautifully simple account of natural language, one which saves all of the intuitively beautiful principles – principles that afford semantic closure – without the cost of *ad hocery, et cetera*" (Beall, 2000, p. 116). As to whether Beall agrees with Priest's simplicity role in non-observable domains is not made apparent. What is apparent is that Beall finds it interesting "that simplicity seems to push in the other direction when dealing with the observable world. This, in the end, forms the grounds on which we should hold that the observable world is consistent: *namely, simplicity*" (Beall, 2000, p. 116).

Beall's simplicity view would fail to have a bearing on God's unknowability and ineffability paradox. This is because Beall's view on simplicity is confined to the observable world. As a result of which it would only be inclusive of observable phenomenon. The consistency of the observable world would be determined by this very measure. However, this would omit an unknowable and ineffable God because such a God is not situated within observable domains. An unknowable and ineffable God would pertain, it seems, to non-observable domains. In such a case, as Priest (1987, 1989) has advocated, simplicity would compel us in subscribing to dialetheism. Although the form of dialetheism I have in mind is not the sort that is commonly understood.

5.5 Observing Contradictions

Having drawn on the LNC from both metaphysical and epistemic perspectives has provided a somewhat nuanced idea of its philosophical scope. It can now be determined which of the relevant perspectives that fall under this scope are being violated by God's unknowability and ineffability paradox. This would grant a further understanding of the nature of this paradox as well as motivating dialetheism in resolving this paradox. It appears that the violation of the LNC from both metaphysical and epistemic perspectives would introduce a further predicament for an unknowable and ineffable God. This is largely due to the epistemic perspectives of both a mind-independent and mind-dependent view of the LNC. In both cases we would possess epistemic access to the knowledge of reality in virtue of either our *perception* or *conception* of the facts that constitute it. This knowledge would necessarily be inclusive of reality's intrinsic feature, the LNC.

In the case of the LNC being violated by an unknowable and ineffable God – albeit in different ways – it means that we would possess epistemic access in being able to *know* this violation. Moreover, the violation of the LNC in both cases of epistemic realism and epistemic anti-realism would, in essence, be a violation of the consistency constraint. Consequently, it would allow for our *perception* or *conception* of reality to be inconsistent, ensuing a paradoxical case of an unknowable and ineffable God. The fundamental issue, however, is that possessing a type of epistemic access to an inconsistent reality in which an unknowable and ineffable God is situated would compromise the very unknowability and ineffability of that God.

Allow me to flesh this issue out further. In the case of a (epistemic) mind-dependent view of the LNC, just as we are able to *perceive* the consistency constraint it bears on reality; we are able to *perceive* of its violation. Though, being able to perceive the violation of the LNC would entail being able to perceive *all* trivial cases (in the absence of dialetheism of course). An

301

unknowable and ineffable God would be one of those cases. This is because a contradiction would logically, and therefore metaphysically, entail everything in virtue of (*ex falso quodlibet*) the principle of explosion: $\alpha, \neg\alpha \models \beta$, for all α and β. Our *perception* would be of an inconsistent reality in which God is situated. We seem to encounter the same predicament when considering a (epistemic) mind-dependent view of the LNC. The only notable difference would be that in the case of a mind-dependent view of the LNC, just as we are able to *conceive* the consistency constraint on our conception of reality; we are able to *conceive* of its violation. Thus, an unknowable and ineffable God would be among one of *all* the trivial cases we are able to conceive of. Our *conception* would be of an inconsistent reality in which God is situated.

Though, irrespective of whichever epistemic view of reality one subscribes to, being able to *perceive* or *conceive* of the violation of LNC would infer an ability to know what contradictions would look like. This would include knowing what an unknowable and ineffable God would look like. That is because God, in this case, would be among one of the trivial cases that has ensued due to violating the LNC. Much of this, however, would hinge on exactly what we mean by 'observation'. In this regard, Beall and Colyvan (2001), make an important distinction between two different senses of 'observation'. These are as follows:

i.   a state of affairs σ is observable iff it can be observed that σ is the case;

ii. a state of affairs is observable iff that state of affairs itself can be observed. (Beall and Colyvan, 2001, p. 565)

They call the former sense of observable, *weakly observable*, and the latter sense, *strongly observable*. Considering this distinction, contradictions are weakly observable and not strongly observable. This is on the assumption that we do *not* observe contradictions themselves. Instead, we observe instantiations of contradictions in virtue of various forms of vagueness. Contrary to this line of reasoning, Beall and Colyvan think that contradictions are strongly

observable. They give an example of observing a purplish-blue object in making their case. Apparently, we see both the purpleness and the blueness of the purplish-blue object. Consequently, for them, "It seems plausible then that we see the blueness and non-blueness of the purplish-blue object. In short, we see the contradiction and so the contradiction is indeed strongly observable" (Beall and Colyvan, 2001, p. 566). By making the case for observable contradictions Beall and Colyvan thus infer the observable world is inconsistent. Beall's (2000) view has now altered in Beall and Colyvan (2001).

If we are able to observe contradictions themselves like in the case of the purplish-blue object, then vagueness must be accepted as a feature of the world. For proponents of realism, vagueness would consequently have to be a feature of the actual world and not just our representation of it. To demonstrate this, Beall and Colyvan refer to our best scientific theories. Language of our best scientific theories is not merely supposed to represent the world; it anticipates doing so accurately. Now if the language of our best scientific theories (indispensably) involves vague predicates, then as naturalistic philosophers we have good reason to believe that this vagueness is a feature of the world. Having said this, Beall and Colyvan admit that this is not supposed to be an argument for vagueness to be an actual feature of the world. Rather, it is supposed to be a more plausible way of looking at contradictions in the world than Escher-like drawings.

Making the case for an inconsistent observable world hardly seems to posit a more or less plausible way of looking at it. It is surprising to think that benchmarking what is commonly deemed plausible in matters of inconsistency would have any serious bearing. Surly the plausibility factor would lose its impetus when using it to measure or ascertain observable contradictions in the world. Moreover, Beall's and Colyvan's reference to language of our best scientific theories may provide good reason to naturalistic philosophers, but not for those who

oppose naturalism. To confine the inference '*that vagueness is an actual feature of the world*' from '*language of our best scientific theories (indispensably) involves vague predicates*' to naturalistic philosophers, seems to limit the view of an inconsistent observable world to a selected few.

Furthermore, observing both the blueness and non-blueness of the purplish-blue object does not imply that we have viewed a contradiction itself. Thus, to say it is a strongly observable instance of a contradiction seems overly ambitious. Beall and Colyvan concede to this objection with the condition that if we are unable to observe strongly observable contradictions, then very little is strongly observable. According to them, if this condition is met, we would not be able to strongly observe that the earth rotates. All we would be able to observe are the rotating heavens. That is because a great deal of inference and theory is involved before reaching the conclusion that the earth rotates. Beall and Colyvan do not pursue this matter further than this. It seems that their point is not so much concerned with establishing that contradictions are strongly observable per se. Rather, they seem more concerned with having established that contradictions are observable in the same way many other intuitive observable facts of the world are. For them, this point is sufficient in countering Priest's claim that contradictions are not observable.

Beall's and Colyvan's view that contradictions are strongly observable is not a well-argued position; against the assumption that we do *not* observe contradictions themselves. Consequently, I take contradictions that have ensued due to violating the LNC to be weakly observable contradictions and not strongly observable. This is predicated on the view that the observable world is consistent in virtue of its intrinsic feature, namely, the LNC which imposes a consistency constraint. Yet, we encounter violations of the LNC that result in inconsistent accounts of reality and the observable world. Instances of these include Escher, Escher-like

figures, and examples of vagueness[260]. The way in which we encounter these violations of the LNC, be it in virtue of any one of the epistemic views of reality, we are not *perceiving* or *conceiving* of contradictions themselves. Rather, we are *perceiving* or *conceiving* instantiations of contradictions in virtue of various forms of vagueness. Therefore, our observations of Escher, Escher-like figures, and examples of vagueness are not observations of contradictions themselves. Instead, they are instantiations of contradictions from which we can at best infer that there *are* contradictions.

In the case of an unknowable and ineffable God, we are not observing an instance of a contradictory God Himself in any sense. What we are observing are instantiations of contradictions that constitute relevant pieces of evidence which, at best, allows us to infer a contradictory case of an unknowable and ineffable God. Alternatively put, this would be inferring an unknowable and ineffable God pertaining to non-observable domains from instantiations of specific contradictions situated in an observable domain. Exactly what observing such instantiations of contradictions may involve, and how they may be considered as pieces of evidence from which we are able to infer an unknowable and ineffable God, may vary among Islamic theologians and philosophers. One possibility may involve an array of theological contradictions within the Islamic tradition. We needn't specify all of these theological contradictions. Yet their source may be located in striving to make sense of God's relationship with the world and us human beings. These contradictions may particularly be those ensued from the conjunction of doctrinal beliefs, which are deemed *real* in some way,

---

260 See:

Keefe, R. and Smith, P., 1997. Introduction: theories of vagueness. In: R. Keefe and P. Smith, ed., *Vaguness: A Reader*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, pp.1-57.

Keil, G., 2013. Introduction: Vagueness and Ontology. *Metaphysica*, 14(2), pp.149-164.

Sorensen, R., 2001. *Vagueness and Contradiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

and observable phenomena in the world[261]. For instance, God's omnipotence and human free-will. God's atemporal, nonspatial nature, and His being the ultimate cause of every temporal and spatial event. The failure to reconcile between these doctrinal beliefs and observable phenomena in the world may serve as relevant pieces of evidence from which we are able to infer a *contradictory* case of an unknowable and ineffable God.

6. Metaphysical Dialetheism

There is, however, an underlying issue that has persisted. It is one to do with trivialism. Trivialism, according to Priest (2006), is "the view that everything is true" (Priest, 2006, p. 12). A trivialist would then be someone who believes everything, including the truth of *all* contradictions. Trivialism, in this case, stems from being able to perceive or conceive *all* trivial cases in either view of epistemic mind-independence and mind-dependence, respectively. This would mean that we are able to perceive or conceive of the violation of the LNC in every case in which the LNC is violated. Moreover, all these contradictory cases would be true. An unknowable and ineffable God would be one of those cases. Thus, the cost at which we can posit a contradictory case of an unknowable and ineffable God would be extremely high. It would bloat our ontology with innumerable contradictions; some of which may prove to be antithetical to my aim. Resultantly, we would need to restrict our perception or conception of

---

261 Though, I acknowledge that there are contradictions that ensue from specific beliefs related to the Islamic God Himself. These are not contradictions that ensue from the conjunction of certain beliefs in God and observable phenomena in the world. A notable example would be pertaining to God's essence and attributes, which manifests an unequivocal defiance of the law of non-contradiction. This is articulated in *Nasafī's Māturīdī* Creed as "God has pre-eternal attributes subsisting in His essence. They are not He and nor other than He." (Nasafī's Māturīdī Creed translated by Watt in Reynolds, 2014, p. 114) Focussing on the latter claim of this short excerpt, this article of faith would evidently be deemed false. By standards of classical logic, it would result in a contradiction and thus be ruled out a priori. The logical form of this statement would be represented by way of a double negation as follows: $(\neg F(a) \wedge \neg(\neg F(a)))$. This would read as: object a does not have property F and nor does it not have property F. This logical notation can equally be represented as $(a \wedge \neg a)$ since according to the equivalence relation any instant of a double negation such as $\neg\neg a$ can be replaced by a without altering the truth value.

the violation of the LNC to *some* (exclusive) cases as opposed to *all* cases. To do this, I shall resort to a form of dialetheism[262].

Priest, who is one of the prominent advocates of dialetheism, states that "Specifically, a *dialetheia* is a true contradiction, a pair, α and ¬α, which are both true (or equivalently, supposing a normal notion of conjunction, a truth of the form α ∧ ¬α). A *dialetheist* is therefore a person who holds that some contradictions are true" (Priest, 2007, p. 131). This definition, however, seems to entertain an ambiguity with regards to two possible defining features of dialetheism. Martin (2014) highlights these as follows:

> D1) Some contradictions are true.
>
> D2) Some propositions are both true *and* false. (Martin, 2014, p. 16)

Martin notes that within the dialetheic literature, it is not entirely clear as to whether both these features, (D1) and (D2), are equal in defining dialetheism. Nor is it clear as to whether one of these features is theoretically primary over the other. With respect to Priest on this matter he states that "Priest (1989, p. 141) himself has emphasised that dialetheism rejects "[t]he fundamental classical postulate that truth and falsehood are mutually exclusive," although when defining dialetheism he often gives first billing to the truth of contradictions" (Martin, 2014, p. 16)[263]. Despite this ambiguity, I shall consider (D1) as theoretically primary over (D2). This is a corollary of having established that metaphysical matters themselves precede our

---

262 It should be noted that I do not think metaphysical (or a realist) dialetheism collapses into trivialism as Kroon (2004) and Tahko (2009) have argued in different ways. For a response to both arguments see Estrada-González (2014).

263 Considering this Martin (2014) states in footnote 7: See Priest (2004, p. 29). Priest (2006b, p. 4), when explaining the etymology of 'dialetheia', gives a conditional with a true contradiction, $p \land \sim p$, as the antecedent, and the simultaneous truth *and* falsity of p as the consequent, which could suggest that the truth of contradictions is primary for Priest. Similarly, if we conceive of a contradiction as the conjunction of a proposition and its negation, then Priest's (2004, p. 33 & 2006a, p. 1) use of 'false' to mean simply 'has a true negation' implies that the truth of contradictions is primary for Priest. (Martin, 2014, p. 16)

expressions of them. Thus, the existence of some true contradictions would precede our expressions of them in propositional form.

A dialetheist's position then enables us to restrict our perception or conception of the violation of the LNC in accommodating exclusive contradictory cases, such as an unknowable and ineffable God. As opposed to admitting all contradictory cases[264]. A further distinction that needs to be drawn is between what is termed '*metaphysical dialetheism*' and '*semantic dialetheism*'. Mares (2004) offers the following distinction between both terms:

> The metaphysical dialetheist holds that there are aspects of the world (or of some possible world) for which any accurate description will contain a true contradiction. Semantic dialetheism, on the other hand, maintains that it is always possible to redescribe this aspect of the world, using a different vocabulary (or perhaps vocabularies), consistently without sacrificing accuracy. (Mares, 2004, p. 270)

Citing Mares (2004), Priest states the following accounts of each type of dialetheism.

---

264 Dialetheists believe that they have good enough reason to hold this position. This would be exclusive to specific contradictions that satisfy certain conditions. Priest (2002) specifies these conditions under what he calls the '*Inclosure Schema*'. For more on the Inclosure Schema see:

> Abad, J., 2006. The inclosure scheme and the solution to the paradoxes of self-reference. *Synthese*, 160(2), pp.183-202.

> Badici, E., 2008. The Liar Paradox and the Inclosure Schema. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 86(4), pp.583-596.

> J. J. Smith, N., 2000. The principle of uniform solution (of the paradoxes of self-reference). *Mind*, 109(433), pp.117-122.

> Joseph Lewis Martin, B., 2014. *The Logical and Philosophical Foundations for the Possibility of True Contradictions*. Ph.D. University College London.

To illustrate further the distinction he [Mares, 2004] has in mind, he cites accounts of each kind. First, metaphysical dialetheism: suppose that one is a traditional correspondence theorist. Then the truth of α and ¬α will correspond to facts in extra-linguistic reality. In particular, then, there must be ''negative facts''—facts that make negated sentences true—which may operate independently of the corresponding ''positive fact''. (A detailed articulation of such a theory can be found in DTBL, section 2.7.) Next, semantic dialetheism: one may note that a dialetheia will arise if a notion is over-defined. Thus, suppose that we define the predicate 'x is an Adult' to be true of persons iff they are 16 or over, and to be false of persons iff they are 18 or under. Then, though the facts about people and their ages are consistent enough, a 17-year-old will be both an Adult and not an Adult. One might hold that all dialetheias arise because of (implicit) definitions of this kind. (Priest, 2006, p 300)

For now, I shall concern myself with metaphysical dialetheism and not semantic dialetheism. This is because semantic dialetheism would consider the paradox of an unknowable and ineffable God as a semantic paradox and not a metaphysical paradox. Semantic dialetheism shall posit the paradox as a semantic inconsistency that arises due to the relationship between our language and an unknowable and ineffable God. This would rule out instantiations of contradictions in the world from which we are able to infer a contradictory case of an unknowable and ineffable God. Metaphysical dialetheism, for the moment, would thus seem like an appropriate candidate. Resorting to metaphysical dialetheism would require a nuanced understanding of it.

The metaphysical dialetheist's position must be, as Priest (2006) states, one where "it makes sense to talk about [an inconsistent] reality itself" (Priest, 2006, p. 300). He unpacks this further by postulating three conditions that qualify metaphysical dialetheism. These are:

1. There is an extra-linguistic reality

2. Reality is constituted by facts

3. There are polarities within facts (Priest, 2006, p. 300)

The first of these conditions posits the make-up of reality in a way that is beyond mere linguistic expressions. In Priest's words "this reality must comprise things that are propositional in some sense" (Priest, 2006, p. 300). Otherwise, it would make no sense in referring to constituents of reality, such as tables and chairs, as being consistent or inconsistent. Thus, the second of these conditions incurs. Such 'facts' may be considered as 'fact-like entities such as objects-cum-properties'. However, despite the second condition, appealing to facts as consistent or inconsistent does not offer an accurate mapping between the facts in question and language. "There must therefore be more to the matter than this; there must be something within the structure of facts that corresponds to negation in language" (Priest, 2006, p. 300). Thus, the third of these conditions incurs. In this case, "if $f+$ is a possible fact, say one that would make α true, there must be a corresponding one, $f-$, that would make $\neg\alpha$ true" (Priest, 2006, p. 300). In sum of these conditions, metaphysical dialetheism is the view that "for some f both $f+$ and $f-$ obtain/exist/are actual, or however one wishes to phrase the matter" (Priest, 2006, p. 300).

As to *exactly* what qualifies as metaphysical dialetheism may be contested. Priest concedes that "there may well be no uniform answer to the issue of metaphysical dialetheism" (Priest, 2006, p. 302). Despite the nonuniformity of exactly what counts as metaphysical dialetheism, the way it's characterisation currently stands, is not merely a consequence of dialetheism itself but presupposes a type of metaphysical realism. Priest states that, metaphysical dialetheism "will stand or fall with this" (Priest, 2006, p. 302). Though, he agrees that in some matter's dialetheism should be espoused from a realist perspective while in others it should not. To resolve God's unknowability and ineffability paradox it seems that we require a metaphysical

dialetheism. An unknowable and ineffable God would thus have to qualify all three of the above conditions.

To get a sense of this, say that God's unknowability and ineffability paradox (α and $\neg\alpha$) consists of four facts in total. These are $f+$ and $f-$ respectively. Each of these are comprised of two paradoxical elements – both acting as corresponding facts. $f+$ is comprised of $f+^{\text{unknowability}}$ and $f+^{\text{ineffability}}$. $f-$ is comprised of $f-^{\text{unknowability}}$ and $f-^{\text{ineffability}}$. $f+^{\text{unknowability}}$ expresses that if every truth, including the truth about God's unknowability, is possibly knowable in principle, then it logically follows that every truth is known at some time. This would be inclusive of the truth pertaining to God's unknowability. $f+^{\text{ineffability}}$ expresses that if every truth, including the truth about God's inexpressibility (ineffability), is possibly expressible in principle, then it logically follows that every truth is expressible at some time. This would be inclusive of the truth pertaining to God's ineffability. The truth $f+$ would make α true. Both these paradoxical elements are conjuncts of the following corresponding (negative) facts, namely, $f-^{\text{unknowability}}$ and $f-^{\text{ineffability}}$. Each of these are negations of what is expressed by $f+^{\text{unknowability}}$ and $f+^{\text{ineffability}}$. The truth $f-$ would make $\neg\alpha$ true. This can be expressed as follows:

$$f+^{\textbf{unknowability}} = \forall p\ (p \rightarrow \Diamond Kp) \vdash \forall p\ (p \rightarrow Kp) \text{ and } f-^{\textbf{unknowability}} = \forall p\ \neg(p \rightarrow \Diamond Kp) \vdash \forall p\ \neg(p \rightarrow Kp)$$

$$f+^{\textbf{ineffability}} = \forall p\ (p \rightarrow \Diamond Ep) \vdash \forall p\ (p \rightarrow Ep) \text{ and } f-^{\textbf{ineffability}} = \forall p\ \neg(p \rightarrow \Diamond Ep) \vdash \forall p\ \neg(p \rightarrow Ep)$$

In line with Priest's characterisation of metaphysical dialetheism, both $f+^{\text{unknowability and ineffability}}$ and $f-^{\text{unknowability and ineffability}}$ would obtain/exist/be actual. This would allow for the truth of α and $\neg\alpha$. The affirmation and negation of God's unknowability and ineffability would thus be considered a metaphysical dialetheia. In virtue of the first condition, an unknowable and ineffable God would have to be situated in an extra-linguistic reality. In virtue of the second condition, given that this reality comprises of God (among other things), He would have to be propositional in some sense. God would thus pertain to a fact or a fact-like entity such as an

object-cum-property. Finally, in virtue of the third condition, there must be polarities within these facts pertaining to God. However, qualifying an unknowable and ineffable God under these conditions would prove problematic. Predominantly for metaphysical reasons. This is not to downplay the corollary of epistemic issues. I anticipate that my take on inferring a contradictory case of an unknowable and ineffable God from our ability to observe instantiations of contradictions situated in observable domains, should suffice in addressing some of the relevant epistemic issues.

7. The Solution

The problem that stems from these conditions would essentially involve metaphysically theorising an unknowable and ineffable God within a preconceived mind-independent reality. Theorising God by situating Him within an extra-linguistic reality, which is either constituted by facts or a fact-like entities such as objects-cum-properties, and a reality that possesses polarities within those facts, would all prove inimical to God's unknowability and ineffability. Alternatively, a preconceived mind-dependent reality would not be any less inimical to God's unknowability and ineffability either. In both cases, God would be homogenous with everything else situated within that given reality. God's existence, from a qualitative perspective, would not be any different to the qualitative existence of objects. If we're unable to distinguish God's existence from the existence of other objects within any given reality[265],

---

265 This issue is hardly new. D. Z. Phillips (2005) explicates this matter as follows: If "Being" is thought as the inclusive, metaphysical category that includes all things, do those things include God? It may be said that there are degrees of being, as though being were a property of things (Rhees 1997d). But if the difference between God and other beings is one of degree, and one says, for example, that God is *more* powerful than the devil, what measure of comparison would one be using (Rhees 1997b)? Such a comparison leads to the anthropomorphic God of Cleanthes in Hume's *Dialogues*, a conception all too common in contemporary philosophy of religion. Advocates of Radical Orthodoxy argue that the confusion of treating "God" as a being among beings can be traced to Duns Scotus, who departed from Aquinas's insight that God is not a substance, not a member of any species or genus (Blond 1998). (Phillips, 2005, p. 456)

then either *all* or *none* of the occupants of that reality will be unknowable and ineffable. In either case, God's absolute uniqueness would be compromised on the grounds of existence. Considering this, the conditions that qualify metaphysical realism would not be amenable to God's unknowability and ineffability.

To evade these issues, I propose an alternative set of conditions. These conditions are the constituting elements that formulate a type of dialetheism that I shall call 'mystical dialetheism'. They are as follows:

1′. There is an extra-linguistic *unknowable and ineffable God*.

2′. There are revelationary facts about an *unknowable and ineffable God*.

3′. Our epistemic access to those revelationary facts infers at least one interpretation in which there are polarities within those facts.

It is evident from the above conditions that mystical dialetheism is exclusive to unknowable and ineffable God. Furthermore, I have shifted from Priest's metaphysical dialetheic worldview to a specific dialetheic view of God Himself. To understand the motivation behind this move, namely from a preconceived (extra-linguistic) reality to an unknowable and ineffable God, I shall cast further light on the God in question. Thereafter, I shall explicate what this means for His existence. Hofweber (2016, 2017) provides a comprehensive idea of what he thinks is *completely ineffable* as opposed to *de facto* ineffable. *De facto* ineffability involves things which we are unable to think or say. *Complete ineffability* involves not being able to think or say despite having unlimited resources at our disposal such as time and memory. The notion of complete ineffability then fails to be conceptually represented under all circumstances – that is, under all possible instances of thought or language. It is of the kind which our minds are simply unsuited to represent. In virtue of this, *complete ineffability* would be inclusive of

313

unknowability and incomprehensibility but not vice versa. *De facto* ineffability need not be unknowable and incomprehensible. With the aid of certain unlimited resources, such as time and memory, we may come to know and comprehend things which otherwise may seem farfetched. An example of this, as Hofweber (2016) puts it is, ""the sand-metric of planet earth": the precise distance of every grain of sand on earth to every other one (right now)" (Hofweber, 2016, p. 251). The very fact of the sand-metric outstretches human capacities in being able to know it. Though, with the aid of certain unlimited resources it would be possible. With this in mind, I take God to be completely ineffable, which is inclusive of unknowability and incomprehensibility. This notion of complete ineffability supplements specific aspects of what I have previously alluded to, namely the *approximate* representation of *al-Ghazālī's* and Bennett-Hunter's view.

The move from an extra-linguistic reality to an unknowable and ineffable God is anticipated to omit our speculations of reality[266] for notable reasons. It aims to primarily engage with (the belief in) an unknowable and ineffable entity, namely, God. This seeks to avoid imposing 'unknowability' and 'ineffability' on any given view of reality or any constituting objects of that reality. Unknowability and ineffability would thus be exclusive to God Himself. Moreover, it circumvents inhibiting God to any given view of reality since He cannot be conceptually represented. In this sense, God needn't be situated in, or be an object of, a preconceived mind-dependent or mind-independent reality. Nor does He need to be numerically identical to either

---

266 I don't think situating God within or making Him identical with what may be referred to as an "ultimate reality" actually manages to avoid the issue at hand. Adopting such an option would come with its own set of (four logical) objections (see Phillips, 2005, p. 456-457). For Phillips (2005), "These four logical objections cannot be evaded by saying that God is beyond human categories. The word "God" is in our midst and awaits analysis like any other word. What the objections show is that the metaphysical realm in which God is said to dwell is an intellectual aberration." (Phillips, 2005, p. 458)

of those realities themselves[267]. God's *existence* cannot be the same. Since being and existence are considered the same from an ontological perspective. Neither can it be univocal as being and existence are considered univocal from a semantic perspective[268]. Thus, an unknowable and ineffable God is utterly unique in His existence.

8. Meinongianism

It's somewhat clear that my view of God's existence departs from the Quinean mainstream (standard) meta-ontology. This may seem like an adequate reason to motivate, and resort to, a non-standard meta-ontological view, namely Meinongianism. Though it will have to be the kind which allows us to distinguish between modes of being from an ontological perspective and denote different meanings to them from a semantic perspective. A Meinongian, as characterised by Sainsbury (2015), is someone who subscribes to the ontological thesis that "some things do not exist" (Sainsbury, 2010, p. 45). To supplement this ontological thesis, Sainsbury states that Meinongians also hold the following semantic theses: "Some proper names refer to things which do not exist, and can be used to state truths about such things. Some quantifications range over things that do not exist, and can be used to state truths about such things" (Sainsbury, 2010, p. 45). The point of departure for Meinongians (advocates of Alexius Meinong and not neo-Meinongians) from the Quinean mainstream meta-ontology lies in their distinguishing between the *Sein* (existential status) and *Sosein* (certain features or properties) of objects. Thus, "Meinongians believe that things can be there to bear properties, and to make some statements true, even when they do not exist. This Meinong called the

---

267 See Ahsan, A., 2017. A Realist Approach in Analytic Theology and the Islamic Tradition. *Philosophy and Theology*, 29(1), pp.101-132.

268 See Ahsan, A., 2019. Quine's Ontology and the Islamic Tradition. *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 36(2), pp.20-63.

'Principle of Independence' (of *Sosein* from *Sein*) in his most famous work, the *Gegenstandstheorie* or Theory of Objects (Meinong 1904)" (Berto and Plebani, 2015, p. 100).

The fundamental objection against the Principle of Independence is that "If there *are* such things, how can they fail to have *being*?[269]" (Berto and Plebani, 2015, p. 101). The way in which Meinongians have responded to this objection appears to be the source from which two of the main types of Meinongians emerge. These are categorised by Eklund (2006) as *non-commitment* Meinongians[270] and *modes-of-being* Meinongians. The former type responds to the objection by upholding that being-or-existence is univocal while postulating that some things lack being, that is existence. Even if being is expressed as having different modes or spoken of using different terms (such as 'to be'), it lacks existence[271]. Considering this, abstract and fictional objects lack existence altogether. Such objects do not occupy a physical space and/or nor are they located in time. This makes them devoid of causal powers. Therefore, abstract objects are non-existent. *Non-commitment* Meinongianism would be antithetical in postulating the utterly unique existence of an unknowable and ineffable God. This is for two primary reasons. Firstly, it would consider such a God as non-existent since God does not occupy a physical space and nor is He temporal. Secondly, even if His existence was posited in some respect, it would be univocal with the existence of other objects.

---

269 Berto (2012) refers to this as 'the Argument from Italics'. Simply because it focuses on questioning the italic terms used to express a distinction in meaning between non-being and existence. Moreover, as Berto notes, the 'the Argument from Italics' seems to be a more pressing concern for Meinongian quantification, which precedes the charge of immediate self-contradiction. Considering this, I need not focus on the secondary issue, namely, the charge of immediate self-contradiction in virtue of an unknowable and ineffable God. This is because Meinongianism seems to fail as an appropriate candidate to postulate the utterly unique existence of an unknowable and ineffable God in virtue of the first issue, namely, 'the Argument from Italics'.

270 Non-commitment Meinongians appear to have gained significant popularity. Some of the proponents of this this type include: Routley (1980); Priest (2005); Berto (2012), and Crane (2013).

271 See Berto (2012) and Crane (2013).

The latter type responds to the objection by formulating a distinction between two modes of being. That is between existence (*Existenz*) and subsistence (*Bestand*). In virtue of this distinction, things are said to exist if they occupy a physical space and/or located in time. Existence in this sense is the existence of concrete objects that possess causal powers. Alternatively, things are said to subsist if they do not occupy a physical space and/or not located in time. Subsistence might then be attributed to notions like consistency and coherence. To get a better sense of this distinction, Zalta (1988) defines what it is to be ordinary (referring to things that are said to exist) and what it is to be abstract (referring to things that are said to subsist). To do this, he introduces a one-place predicate '*exists*' which is expressed as *E*! This specifically captures ordinary things that are said to *exist* at some time. On the contrary, abstract things could never *exist*. These are expressed as follows:

being ordinary ('O!') $=_{df}$ [λx ◊♦E!x]

being abstract ('A!') $=_{df}$ [λx ∼◊♦E!x] (Zalta, 1988, p. 21)

The introduction of the one-place predicate '*exists*' (*E*!) requires to be distinguished from the common existential quantifier '∃'. Thus, the reading of '(∃x) ϕ' would be 'there is an x such that ϕ'. The reading of '(∃x) (*E*!x & ϕ)' would be 'there exists an x such that ϕ'. Traditionally (in compliance to Quinean meta-ontology), the standard existential quantifier '∃' would posit ontological commitment. Considering this, the first reading ought to posit existence. For Zalta (1988) however, it does not. That is because there is a distinction to be made between existence and subsistence. Existence is to be posited with the one-place predicate '*exists*' (*E*!). To flesh this out further he states:

The only exception to this concerns the distinction between the principles of Existential Generalization and *Existential* Generalization. The former characterizes the inference from ϕ_α^T to (∃α) ϕ (where α is any variable and *T* any term substitutable for α). The

latter characterizes the inference from $\phi_x{}^T$ to '$(\exists x)$ $(E!x \ \& \ \phi)$. Consequently, given this way of speaking, Existential Generalization does not yield an *existence* claim – it only yields the conclusion that something satisfies the formula in question. *Existential Generalization*, however, yields a conclusion to the effect that something exists and satisfies the formula in question. (Zalta, 1988, p. 21)

Modes-of-being Meinongians would therefore accept that quantifying over variables would commit us to their being. While it would not grant it a full-blown form of ordinary existence. The being expressed in virtue of the 'is' in the reading of '$(\exists x)$ ϕ' would be "an impoverished or watered-down form of being" (Berto and Plebani, 2015, p. 101). This seems to suggest that the departure form Quineanism is a partial one. Although, it seeks to draw a distinction between being and existence, it does so by shifting from a full-blown ordinary existence to a 'watered-down' being which is equally quantifiable. *Modes-of-being* Meinongianism may seem to be a suitable candidate for postulating the utterly unique existence of an unknowable and ineffable God. However, it's compliance to a 'watered-down Quineanism' carries over the same issues if one were committed to a full-blown form of Quineanism. This includes being able to quantify over both types of being albeit using different notations. Of course, *modes-of-being* Meinongianism certainly allows us to distinguish between God's utterly unique existence (being) and the existence of other objects from an ontological perspective. The distinction, nonetheless, seems to implicate an 'impoverished or watered-down form of being' on the one hand and 'a full-blown ordinary existence' on the other. Irrespective of whichever one of these is selected to represent God's utterly unique existence, the issue persists either in the form of a 'watered-down Quineanism' or a full-blown Quineanism respectively. Moreover, the semantic difference between both modes of being is abstruse. Such sematic indeterminacy would fail to postulate the utterly unique existence of an unknowable and ineffable God.

9. The Mystical in Mystical Dialetheism

To resolve this issue then, we require a departure from metaphysics (in the most generic sense of the term). That is, we need to avoid the use of any metaphysical language and interpretations of it that may lead to philosophically theorising an unknowable and ineffable God. Evading such matters would, in essence, be seeking to escape philosophy. The activity of philosophy mostly concerns itself with aiming to generate thoughts and create propositions that bear a logical form that can be assessed for truth. Such an activity is inimical to an unknowable and ineffable God for reasons we have already established. Circumventing metaphysical language and its interpretations, as well as the activity of philosophy in general, would thus invoke "the mystical". I adopt the term "mystical" from Wittgenstein's final passages of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (*TLP* 6.44, 6.45, 6.522). The understanding that I draw from Wittgenstein's usage of the mystical, on the most part, stems from James R. Atkinson's (2009) interpretation. Though I should clarify from the outset that my reference to Atkinson's 'mystical' interpretation of Wittgenstein does not mean I adopt it in its entirety. I shall confine myself to, and only relate, specific aspects of this interpretation that bear a direct relevance in accounting for the utterly unique existence of an unknowable and ineffable God.

Atkinson considers Wittgenstein's usage of the 'mystical' as a corollary of his aim in the *Tractatus*, namely, drawing the limits of the expressions of thought. In drawing such limits, Wittgenstein is not merely alluding to a binary distinction between what can or cannot be said. A crucial aspect in understanding such limits lies in the phrase "What we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence" (*TLP* 7). 'Silence', for Wittgenstein, seems to be a third alternative. As Atkinson states, the introduction of 'silence' is not to clarify what can be said, or even to stand in for that which cannot be said. In such a case, 'silence' would prove redundant. Instead, invoking 'silence' is supposed to dissuade one from engaging in the activity of philosophy.

319

While simultaneously advocating the fact that one cannot escape in the moment of experience. As Atkinson puts it "The immediacy of this reality in the moment of experience cannot be expressed in words. What cannot be expressed in words is silence" (Atkinson, 2009, p. 138).

'Silence' appears to oppose philosophical activity while bearing an affinity to the mystical. Its opposition to philosophical activity lies in propositions showing the logical form of reality yet failing to say what cannot be put into words. Its affinity to the mystical lies in the fact that it cannot be predicated. Atkinson states, "His [Wittgenstein's] intention is to show that we do not understand the mystical by means of saying *how* the world is, but by viewing (contemplating) or feeling the world as a limited whole, including seeing the limits of language as the limits of my world" (Atkinson, 2009, p. 110). For Atkinson then, Wittgenstein's 'mystical' can only be known in virtue of experience[272]. It is the kind of experience that cannot be expressed with the aid of words. Neither can the experience itself be articulated in propositional form such as "X is a mystical experience". This is because "the moment of experience cannot be expressed in words because by the time one has formulated the experience into a sentence the experience has become the past. Rather, in the moment of feeling the world as a limited whole the mystical shows itself, as at 6.522 where Wittgenstein states that the things that cannot be put into words show themselves; they are what is mystical" (Atkinson, 2009, p. 114-115).

For Wittgenstein, God lies outside of this world and therefore outside of language[273]. Drawing on the relationship between God and the world is much like drawing on the relationship

---

272 Morris and Dodd (2007) offer a similar interpretation in which they say that "The crucial difference is that while philosophy aims to produce thoughts and propositions—things that can be assessed for truth—mysticism involves having a certain kind of experience: a 'feeling'. In ordinary talk, we might express this in terms of a difference between different kinds of grammatical construction involving the concept of knowledge: we might say that, whereas philosophy is concerned to provide knowledge that, mysticism provides us with knowledge of an object, acquaintance-knowledge (Morris and Dodd, 2007, p. 263).

273 For Wittgenstein's thoughts on God and the meaning of life see his *Notebooks 1914—1916*.

between what can and cannot be said. To obtain a sense of how both give rise to the same problem consider what Wittgenstein famously alluded to in the preface of *TLP*. That is, just as we may engage in drawing limits on the expressions of thought we should have to be able to think on both sides of this limit. This would imply thinking the unthinkable i.e., that which lies beyond the limit. The matter of a God that lies outside of this world and of language is very much the same. If we begin with what can be said about a God as a means to express that nothing can be said about Him, then we have an apparent contradiction on our hands. Additionally, if nothing can be said about God then He lacks both meaning and the capacity to be verified. This would include not being able to confirm or deny His existence.

This predicament is not, for Wittgenstein, one that can be resolved by resorting to natural science. It cannot be addressed by predicating it in the form "the answer to the problem X is A". Nor can it be verified in virtue of being truth-apt. This is because the problem lies outside of what can be said altogether. Consequently, God is not to be discovered or articulated with the aid of words but through experience and feeling. This requires an internal language of silence. Atkinson therefore states, "In the same vein, if God and the meaning of life lie outside what can be said it appears that Wittgenstein's views on these matters is linked to taking a leap of faith. That is, it appears that the inquirer is required to negate the known world and trust that an answer will arise out of something unknown and unknowable. However, given that the problem of life lies outside language, the way of negation or doubt is the only reasonable way to proceed" (Atkinson, 2009, p. 131).

Though it should be noted that Wittgenstein is by no means implying a complete abandonment of reason only to take a leap of faith. Rather, it is with the use of reason that we ought to arrive at acknowledging the limits of language. Anything beyond this limit, such as God, is to be *believed* in with a leap of faith. 'Belief' in this sense is not comprised of the kind of knowledge

that is required to know something in virtue of language. Rather, it is a kind of belief that is comprised of an internal language of silence. Nonetheless, there is an underlying problem which Atkinson raises and responds to.

> However, the problem with a mystical that lies outside of language is that it cannot be verified in terms of true or false statements. In other words, it can be said that the mystical lacks certainty. However, the *Tractatus* suggests that certainty does not lie in what can be said; rather, doubt lies where something can be said. Where there is a question and an answer there is doubt (6.51). Thus scepticism cannot be applied to what cannot be said. While one may call what cannot be said nonsense, what cannot be said cannot be doubted. (Atkinson, 2009, p. 135)

10. Mystical Dialetheism

Let us now return to the set of conditions I proposed as an alternative to the three conditions of metaphysical dialetheism postulated by Priest (2006). Atkinson's mystical interpretation of Wittgenstein[274] seems to possess some utility in explicating the conditions I proposed. The first of these conditions (1′) is there is an extra-linguistic unknowable and ineffable God. Equipped with this interpretation we're able to account for His utterly unique existence. That is, by grounding our *belief* (in the Wittgensteinian sense) of the utterly unique existence of such a God in "the mystical". In doing so, we can avoid the use of metaphysical language and interpretations of it that may lead to philosophically theorising God. Resultantly, we can resort

---

274 Atkinson's mystical interpretation of Wittgenstein appears to bear a resemblance, in very specific instances, with *al-Ghazālī's* view on the matter. See Heck, P., 2014. *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion*. Oxon: Routledge, pp.113-148.

to a Wittgensteinian silence. This is because, an unknowable and ineffable God transcends beyond the limits of expressions of thought, making His existence unfathomable but not void.

The second of these conditions (2′) is there are revelationary facts about an unknowable and ineffable God. We know this in virtue of revelationary facts that have come (via the medium of Prophecy) from an unknowable and ineffable God. Such revelationary facts would be in the form of divine (speech) language. Similar to the existence of an unknowable and ineffable God, divine (speech) language would be the kind that is beyond the limits of (human) expressions of thought. Leaving our grasp of its *actual* meaning in silence. That is because it emanates from an unknowable and ineffable God Himself. The act of our knowing such revelationary facts is not in virtue of understanding or making sense of divine (speech) language in-and-of-itself (in its truest sense). More accurately, it is a *belief* in revelationary facts, namely in the divine (speech) language of God, which transcends the limits of human language. The same goes for the term 'facts'. It should not be taken as a term that offers a metaphysical explanation of the revelationary facts in question. Rather, it too is a *belief* in the reality of divine (speech) language whose existence transcends beyond the limits of (human) expressions of thought and is ultimately situated in silence.

The third of these conditions is (3′) our epistemic access to those revelationary facts infers at least one *interpretation* in which there are polarities within those facts. This requires clarification. Consider that there exists an epistemic gap between revelationary facts in-and-of-themselves and our ability in grasping their actual meaning. This is simply because revelationary facts in-and-of-themselves transcend beyond the limits of (human) expressions of thought while our ability in understanding and making sense of them lies within that limit. To make up for this discrepancy we engage in exegesis, i.e., interpretations of these revelationary facts. Evidently, these are interpretations that lie within the limits of human

language. From among our interpretative abilities, there is at least one interpretation in which there are polarities of our *understanding* of these revelationary facts. This does not mean that there are polarities within revelationary facts in-and-of-themselves. The polarities are exclusive to at least one interpretation of revelationary facts in our attempt to understand and make sense of them. This means there is at least one interpretation of these revelationary facts such that "if $f+$ is a possible fact, say one that would make α true, there must be a corresponding one, $f-$, that would make $\neg\alpha$ true" (Priest, 2006, p. 300). Given that such polarities of our understanding of revelationary facts occur within the limits of human language, it implies the use of metaphysical explanations and philosophical theorising. Considering this, the key terms within Priest's quote such as "possible fact", "true", and "corresponding" are thus to be considered within the limits of human language. These need not be subjected to the mystical or be situated in silence.

In sum of these conditions, we have what I shall call 'mystical dialetheism'. Where for some f both $f+$ and $f-$ are interpretations of an unknowable and ineffable God's existence and revelationary facts that are ultimately situated in silence. In essence then, mystical dialetheism is specific to at least one human interpretation, from among innumerable others, in which there are polarities of facts. This interpretation is exclusive to an unknowable and ineffable God. This means that this specific interpretation *infers* a contradictory case of an unknowable and ineffable God that is considered to be true. Yet, the truth of this contradiction is grounded in the mystical, namely, it is ultimately situated in silence.

Mystical dialetheism accepts that the contradiction arising from the paradox of an unknowable and ineffable God is true. But unlike semantic dialetheism, it does not confine this contradiction to particular features of our language. Instead, it accepts that there is an unknowable and ineffable God and that there are revelationary facts about this God. However, the existence of

this God and the revelationary facts about Him are unknowable and ineffable (in the radical sense). This means they transcend beyond the limits of expressions of (human) thought. As a result of which we are unable to have any epistemic access to God and revelationary facts about Him in-and-of-themselves. Consequently, the truth of the contradiction is not to be taken in a metaphysical sense or one that can be philosophically theorised. For that would subject an unknowable and ineffable God to metaphysical language and allow for God to be philosophically theorised. Instead, the truth ought to be considered as a matter of *belief*. Not the belief that is comprised of the kind of knowledge that is required to know something in virtue of language. Rather, it is the kind that is situated in a Wittgensteinian silence and thus is mystical.

The way we arrive at this contradiction is by attempting to understand and make sense of an unknowable and ineffable God and the revelationary facts about Him. These attempts would comprise of interpretations that lie within the limits of language. There would be at least one interpretation in which there are polarities of our *understanding* of these revelationary facts. There shall, of course, be alternative interpretations in virtue of which it shall be possible to redescribe aspects of these facts without invoking a contradiction[275]. These interpretations may involve using a different vocabulary. Nevertheless, there would at least be one interpretation which would invoke a contradiction. That is the one I have been concerned with throughout. This *interpretation* would make use of metaphysical explanations and philosophical theorising. In the case of the paradox of an unknowable and ineffable God it may propose that we are observing instantiations of contradictions that constitute relevant pieces of evidence which, at best, allows us to infer a contradictory case of an unknowable and ineffable God.

---

275 See footnote 2.

11. Conclusion

This paper offers a resolve to an Islamic theological contradiction. It is one that I refer to as the paradox of an unknowable and ineffable God. I have established that resorting to metaphysical dialetheism as a resolve to this paradox proves to be inimical to God's unknowability and ineffability. Resultantly, I have proposed an alternative type of dialetheism which aims to resolve the paradox of an unknowable and ineffable God. I call this type of dialetheism, 'mystical dialetheism'. Mystical dialetheism claims that the paradox of an unknowable and ineffable God is a true contradiction. The way in which it arrives at this contradiction is by alluding to at least one interpretation in which there are polarities within revelationary facts about an unknowable and ineffable God. This specific interpretation proposes that we are observing instantiations of contradictions that constitute relevant pieces of evidence which, at best, allows us to *infer* a contradictory case of an unknowable and ineffable God. In such a case, we are not observing an instance of a contradictory God Himself. Rather, we are inferring an unknowable and ineffable God pertaining to non-observable domains from instantiations of specific contradictions situated in an observable domain. Yet the truth of this contradiction is not metaphysical. Nor can it be subject to philosophical theorising in any sense. Instead, it is a dialetheia that is ultimately grounded in the mystical.

References

Abad, J. (2006). The inclosure scheme and the solution to the paradoxes of self-reference. *Synthese*, 160(2), pp.183-202.

Abdel Haleem, M. (2005). *The Qur'an*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.312.

Adamson, P. (2007). *Al-Kindī*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ahsan, A. (2017). A Realist Approach in Analytic Theology and the Islamic Tradition. *Philosophy and Theology*, 29(1), pp.101-132.

Ahsan, A. (2019). Quine's Ontology and the Islamic Tradition. *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 36(2), pp.20-63.

Alston, W. (1956). Ineffability. *The Philosophical Review*, 65(4), pp.506-522.

Aranyosi, I. (2013). *Mind, And Logical Space A Revisionary Approach To Divinity*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.9-16.

Atkinson, J. (2009). *The mystical in Wittgenstein's early writings*. New York: Routledge.

Badici, E. (2008). The Liar Paradox and the Inclosure Schema. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 86(4), pp.583-596.

Bayrak, T. and Harris, R. (2014). Ibn al-ʿArabī on Divine Majesty and Beauty. In: J. Renard, ed., *Islamic Theological Themes a primary source reader*. California: University of California Press, pp.181-186.

Beall, J. and Colyvan, M. (2001). Looking for Contradictions. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 79(4), pp.564-569.

Beall, J. and Cotnoir, A. (2017). God of the gaps: a neglected reply to God's stone problem. *Analysis*, 77(4), pp.681–689.

Beall, J. and Logan, S. (2017). *Logic The Basics*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, pp.12-17.

Beall, J. (2000). Is the observable world consistent?. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 78(1), pp.113-118.

Beall, J. (2019). Christ – A Contradiction: A Defense of Contradictory Christology. *Journal of Analytic Theology*, 7, pp.400-433.

Beall, J. (2021). *The contradictory Christ*. 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bennett-Hunter, G. (2015). Divine Ineffability. *Philosophy Compass*, 10(7), pp.489-500.

Bennett-Hunter, G. (2016). *Ineffability and religious experience*. London: Routledge.

Berto, F. and Plebani, M. (2015). *Ontology and metaontology*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Berto, F. (2007). *How to sell a contradiction The Logic and Metaphysics of Inconsistency*. London: College Publications.

Berto, F. (2012). *Existence as a Real Property: The Ontology of Meinongianism*. Dordrecht: Synthèse Library Springer, pp.61-114.

Brown, B. (2004). Knowledge and Non-Contradiction. In: G. Priest, J. Beall and B. Armour-Garb, ed., *The Law of Non-Contradiction New Philosophical Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.126-155.

Bueno, O. (2013). Perception and Conception: Shaping Human Minds. *Biosemiotics*, 6(3), pp.323-336.

Burrell, D. (1987). The Unknowability of God in Al-Ghazali. *Religious Studies*, 23(2), pp.171-182.

Cook, R. (2009). *A dictionary of philosophical logic*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Cotnoir, A. (2017). Theism and Dialetheism. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 96(3), pp.592-609.

Cotnoir, A. (2018). Logical Nihilism. In: J. Wyatt, N. Pedersen and N. Kellen, ed., *Pluralisms in Truth and Logic*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.301-329.

Cotnoir, A. (2019). On the Role of Logic in Analytic Theology: Exploring the Wider Context of Beall's Philosophy of Logic. *Journal of Analytic Theology*, 7, pp.508-528.

Crane, T. (2012). What is the Problem of Non-Existence?. *Philosophia*, 40(3), pp.417-434.

Estrada-González, L. (2014). On the Possibility of Realist Dialetheism. *SATS*, 15(2), pp.197–217.

Gäb, S. (2017). The paradox of ineffability. *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 78(3), pp.289-300.

Ghazālī's Ashʿarī Creed Translated by Watt, W. (2014). In: J. Renard, ed., *Islamic Theological Themes a primary source reader*. California: University of California Press, pp.109-113.

Göcke, B. (2016). The Paraconsistent God. In: H. Von, T. Marschler and T. Schärtl, ed., *Rethinking the Concept of a Personal God Classical Theism, Personal Theism, and Alternative Concepts of God*. Münster: Münster Aschendorff Verlag, pp.177-199.

Griffel, F. (2017). *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grim, P. (2004). What is a Contradiction?. In: G. Priest, J. Beall and B. Armour-Garb, ed., *The Law of Non-Contradiction New Philosophical Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.49-72.

Heck, P. (2014). *Skepticism in Classical Islam: Moments of Confusion*. Oxon: Routledge.

Hick, J. (2000). Ineffability. *Religious Studies*, 36(1), pp.35-46.

Hofweber, T. (2016). *Ontology and the ambitions of metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hofweber, T. (2017). Are There Ineffable Aspects of Reality?. In: K. Bennett and D. Zimmerman, ed., *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics Volume 10*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.124-170.

J. J. Smith, N. (2000). The principle of uniform solution (of the paradoxes of self-reference). *Mind*, 109(433), pp.117-122.

Jacobs, J. (2015). The Ineffable, Inconceivable, and Incomprehensible God Fundamentality and Apophatic Theology. In: J. Kvanvig, ed., *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion*, 6th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.158-176.

Joseph Lewis Martin, B. (2014). *The Logical and Philosophical Foundations for the Possibility of True Contradictions*. Ph.D. University College London.

Kars, A. (2019). *Unsaying God: Negative Theology in Medieval Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Keefe, R. and Smith, P. (1997). Introduction: theories of vagueness. In: R. Keefe and P. Smith, ed., *Vagueness: A Reader*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, pp.1-57.

Keil, G. (2013). Introduction: Vagueness and Ontology. *Metaphysica*, 14(2), pp.149-164.

Kroon, F. (2004). Realism and Dialetheism. In: G. Priest, J. Beall and B. Armour-Garb, ed., *The Law of Non-Contradiction New Philosophical Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.245-263.

Kyriacou, C. and McKenna, R. (2018). Introduction. In: C. Kyriacou and R. McKenna, ed., *Metaepistemology Realism and Anti-Realism*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.1-14.

Mares, E. (2004). Semantic Dialetheism. In: G. Priest, J. Beall and B. Armour-Garb, ed., *The Law of Non-Contradiction New Philosophical Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.264-275.

McGinn, M. (1999). Between Metaphysics and Nonsense: Elucidation in Wittgenstein's Tractatus. *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 49(197), pp.491-513.

McGuinness, B. (1966). The Mysticism of the Tractatus. *The Philosophical Review*, 75(3), p.305.

Miravalle, J. (2020). *God, Existence, and Fictional Objects*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Morris, M. and Dodd, J. (2009). Mysticism and Nonsense in the Tractatus. *European Journal of Philosophy*, 17(2), pp.247-276.

Morris, M. (2008). *Routledge philosophy guidebook to Wittgenstein and the Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. London: Routledge, pp.263-363.

Nasafī's Māturīdī Creed Translated by Watt, W. (2014). In: J. Renard, ed., *Islamic Theological Themes a primary source reader*. California: University of California Press, pp.113-116.

Nordmann, A. (2005). *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: an introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Phillips, D. (2005). Wittgensteinianism Logic, Reality, and God. In: W. Wainwright, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.447-471.

Pilch, M. (2017). The Structure of Wittgenstein's Logical Space. *Wittgenstein-Studien*, 8(1), pp.15-60.

Politis, V. (2021). *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Aristotle and the Metaphysics*. London: Routledge, pp.122-156.

Priest, G. (1987). *In Contradiction A Study of the Transconsistent (Nijhoff International Philosophy Series)*. 1st ed. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Priest, G. (1994). The Structure of the Paradoxes of Self-Reference. *Mind*, 103(409), pp.25-34.

Priest, G. (1999). Perceiving contradictions. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 77(4), pp.439-446.

Priest, G. (2002). *Beyond the limits of thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Priest, G. (2005). Towards non-being. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Priest, G. (2006). *Doubt Truth to be a Liar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Priest, G. (2006). *In Contradiction A Study of the Transconsistent (Expanded Edition)*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Priest, G. (2007). Paraconsistency and Dialtheism. In: D. Gabbay and J. Woods, ed., *Handbook of the History of Logic Volume 8 The Many Valued and Nonmonotonic Turn in Logic*. Amsterdam: Elsevier B.V., pp.129-204.

Priest, G. (2019). Metaphysics and Logic: an Observation in Metametaphysics. *Giornale di Metaphysica*, 41(1), pp.68-77.

Priest, Graham, Francesco Berto, and Zach Weber, "Dialetheism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/dialetheism/>.

Ramsey, F. (1925). The Foundations of Mathematics. *Proceedings of the London Mathematical Society*, 25(1), pp.338-384.

Routley, R. (1980). *Exploring Meinong's jungle and beyond*. Canberra: Australian National Univ.

Routley, R., Arruda, A., Norman, J. and Priest, G. (1989). *Paraconsistent logic*. Munich: Philosophia.

Rush, P. (2014). Logical realism. In: *The Metaphysics of Logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.1-31.

Sainsbury, R. (2010). *Fiction and fictionalism*. London: Routledge, pp.44-67.

Sider, T. (2011). *Writing the book of the world*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp.1-6, 197-255.

Sorensen, R. (2001). *Vagueness and Contradiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tahko, T. (2009). The Law of Non-Contradiction as a Metaphysical Principle. *The Australasian Journal of Logic*, 7, pp.32–47.

Wittgenstein, L., Anscombe, G., Klemke, E. and Wright, G. (2004). *Notebooks 1914-1916*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Zalta, E. (1988). *Intensional logic and the metaphysics of intentionality*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.